

RELIGION
~AND~
BUSINESS



PRACTICAL
SUGGESTIONS
TO MEN OF
AFFAIRS



BY
HENRY A. STIMSON

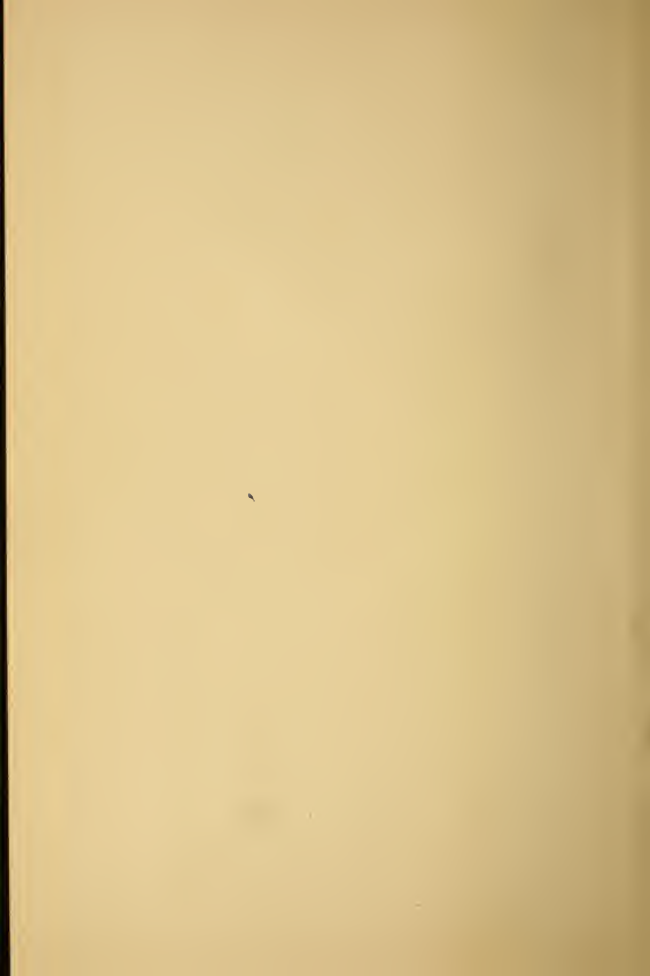
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TO

MEN OF AFFAIRS

BY

HENRY A. STIMSON

PASTOR OF THE BROADWAY TABERNACLE CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH



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TO THE
BUSINESS MEN

TO WHOM IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO PREACH,
AMONG WHOM ARE SOME OF THE NOBLEST
MEN AND THE PUREST, TRUEST CHRIS-
TIAN OF MY ACQUAINTANCE.

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FISHERS OF MEN.

“And He saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed Him.”—MATT. iv. 19, 20.

FISHERS OF MEN.

LUKE tells us that the call of the disciples followed immediately upon the miraculous draught of fishes. You remember that Peter, with Andrew, his brother, and James and John, his partners, were engaged in their avocation of fishermen upon the Lake of Galilee, when Jesus came to them. It is said that to-day one little crazy boat is the sole representative of the fleet of vessels that was engaged in the business in the time of the Gospel. The lake is still abundantly stocked with fish. The catching, curing, and sale of these constituted so important an industry that the Jews have a tradition to the effect that one of the ten laws of Joshua decreed that the lake should always be open to all comers. Not only did the dwellers on its shores derive an important part of their sustenance from the waters of the lake, but fish formed one of the chief articles of their commerce with other places. The indications are that several, at least, of the apostles had acquired some property, and conducted what would to-day be called a fishing business. They employed men and boats.

While they are engaged, then, in their daily avocation, and after the wholesome fashion of the

olden times, when the head of an establishment knew the details of his business at least as well as his employees, and worked with them, they are in the boats superintending, and aiding in the drawing of the nets, Jesus comes to them along the shore. At the moment they have drawn the boats upon the beach preparatory to going home. They have toiled all night and have taken nothing.

At the command of Jesus they embark and draw their nets once more. To their amazement the net is full to the point of breaking. Two boats are required to empty it, and they both are loaded to the water's edge. The Lord has set the stamp of His approval upon their occupation. What a joy to them! What a pleasure it is to any man to have the choicest of his friends, whose companionship he cherishes, whose influence he values, show an interest in his business; come to see him at it, walk through his store or his factory, hear the story of its growth, and rejoice with him in his prospects! Where is the artisan so dull that he does not show to such a friend with pride the product of his skill? And here is the Lord, whom they have already learned to love, coming to the disciples' place of business, interested in their affairs; and, what is more, finding them in the condition to which all business men, even the most successful, are exposed, of temporary ill-success, giving them the benefit of His wiser counsel and larger resources, so effect-

ively that when they act upon His suggestion and resume their disappointing labor, they have great returns.

This was just the approving blessing that we all want. We each know our business better than we know anything else. Our heart is in it. We often talk differently. We wish we were out of it. We envy others. We say, "Times have changed." "There is no profit." "Competition is cruel." But after all, it is the only thing we know thoroughly. The best years of our life have gone into it. That store, those goods, that machinery represent just so much of your brain and heart. Perhaps from the day you left your father's house, or came to New-York a poor youth, you have worked in this one line. For it you have labored and struggled. A self-forgetfulness so constant that it has become a habit that sets the claim of business always first, patience that has brooked all forms of trial, labor often unrewarded and unrecognized, and which takes no account of weariness, courage which fire and blood, pestilence and panic have not daunted, have all gone into it, till you may say with Jacob, "These twenty years have I been with thee. I bore the loss of it, of my hand didst thou require it whether stolen by day or stolen by night. In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes."

In any case it is your business ; all you have. I

might almost say, all you are! What a joy it would be if the Lord would come to you as He did to Peter and John and set His blessing on your work!

I am sure you would not ask at His hand a miraculous draught. You do not care so much for pecuniary success, pleasant as that would be. It would be enough for many of you, dear friends, shall I not say for all, if the Lord would come and bless your business; if He would say, "This is honorable. This, and not something else, is what I want you to do. Keep on. Be calm and steadfast. Here is your true service. Here you are to win your final reward. At least, here, where the necessities of life have placed you, there is nothing incompatible with true service, nothing to prevent your achieving all your heart and mine could desire."

A sense of blessing such as these words give would have filled the disciples' hearts had Jesus quietly withdrawn, saying nothing more, after the draught of the net. If He had so done, the same blessing would come to us to-day, and every one of you business men could go to your work to-morrow cheered and strengthened. You would say, "If the Lord Jesus in the three brief troubled years of His earthly ministry, could care to go and help down-hearted and unsuccessful fishermen, He cannot be unmindful of me. If He were here and should

walk into my store, or stand at my bench, or sit at my desk, I have reason to believe that He would cheer and help me. In any case He would not disapprove because I sell dry-goods, or run a printing-press, or make shoes, or handle iron, or oil, or paper, or cloth, or what not, and tell me to give it up, and go and do something else."

This is what you might say if it were not for our text. For we find that Jesus did not so leave the fishermen, saying nothing. On the contrary, when their net was filled, and full because He had helped them fill it, He gives them the sudden and unlooked-for command. "And He saith unto them, Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." And that there might be no mistake about it, no thought that He was not in earnest, the evangelist adds, "And they straightway left their nets and followed Him."

Here, then, dear friends, where we were not expecting it, is the lesson for us. We express it in these words, "Success in business, or the possession of special and recognized talent for worldly things, is no ground of exemption from special religious service."

It would be a false inference that, because our Lord called Peter and his companions to leave their fishing and become His apostles, every Christian must leave his business and go to preaching. The New Testament is full of the opposite truth. In-

deed far the largest number of believers must in every age "abide in the calling wherein he is called."

But here is the real lesson. Just as little as Peter might have acceptably said, "Lord, I have a large business, indeed very large; my nets are full; unless I give my whole attention to them I shall suffer loss, therefore I cannot come." So little can the Christian say to-day, "Lord, you have given me ten talents, I have a great business, or I am in a first-rate place, or I see a chance of making a pile of money, or I have a gift for music, or art, or literature, and I must devote all my strength and care to cultivating it. I cannot take the time to do any religious work; or, indeed, to care particularly about religious things."

Jesus' voice is heard addressing you, successful business men and women, you prosperous, you efficient, you hard-working ones, in the day of your largest prosperity, when His blessing has been upon you in your temporal affairs, and saying to you, not, "Leave your business"; not, "Disregard and neglect your gift"; but, "Follow me. This business, these gifts, you yourself, are mine. Be mine. Live for me. Plunge your hands into your business. Do it with your might, but keep your heart open. Lift up your eyes and look about you. You have a soul to save, and so has your fellow-man. These are temporal things. They perish in

the using. There are eternal things. Heed them. The fields are white for harvest. Follow me. Yes, you business men. I have work for you. I will make you fishers of men."

Surely, dear friends, this is not a hard command. It is not so much a command as it is a promise, and a privilege. At your business in the day of your largest success, your heaviest duties, you are called to the special service of Christ, you are permitted to do your part and win your reward as fishers of men. Out of this your most frequent, your most natural excuse, there shall come, if you will, largest blessing. Let me unfold this truth for you.

I know that you are ready to recognize, first of all, that your business, large as it may be, your duties, pressing as they may appear, all belong to God.

I am aware that it is common to make a distinction between things secular and things religious. But the distinction is unsound and misleading. In no circumstances of life can we draw a line and say on that side lie my relations to God ; on this side my relations to the world. If we may venture to say what is the most important contribution of modern thought to the life of the world it is the emphasis which is now laid upon what is called "the immanence of God," *i.e.*, the real presence of God in nature as the centre and source of all existence and life. Men have held that God is the creator of all ;

but arresting the thought there, they have regarded the creation as something quite apart from the Creator, as something, therefore, transient, non-essential, and possibly in its nature harmful—in any case a clog and hindrance to the upward flight of the soul in its effort to reach its true life in God. Our life on earth has made certain duties necessary, at least to some, that the work of the world may go on. These are secular. We are to commiserate ourselves so far as we are bound by them, and to escape them when we may, that we may give ourselves to things religious : the things of God and the soul.

It is an impossible distinction. It will not work. More than a century ago a great philosopher, Emanuel Kant, from the standpoint of pure metaphysics, foreshadowed the difficulty into which we have fallen. He said, "Without God and without a world invisible to us now, but hoped for, the glorious ideas of ethics may indeed be objects of admiration and approbation, but cannot be the springs of purpose and action." Yet men have tried to create a world that would run by itself. We have sought a foundation for morals in utility, or in self-interest, or in humanity. We have attempted to build States on the basis of reference only to the issues of this life. We have measured the relations of one State to another by policy. We have exalted statesmen who were shrewd. We have tried to shut out the

consideration of private character from the question of fitness for public office; we have attempted a scheme of general education without the Bible. We have suffered the Sabbath to lose its sanctity. In short, we have tried to do that which the philosopher showed to be impossible. We have erected a scheme of the universe in which there shall be a moral law without the sanction and authority of religion. We have sought to set God outside of daily life.

Now the reaction has come; Philosophy, and Science in her larger realms, have come to our aid. They emphasize this truth, that God is in all life, or He is in none. This world is not the prelude and portal to another world, nor even a preparation for it. It is a part of it. Life does not give place to eternity, it stretches out into it. Eternity is here and now, if it is anywhere. The grave alters neither character nor destiny. Every act of ours, every duty, stands in immediate relation to God, or no act, no duty, can have such relations. To-day, to-morrow, yesterday, are to us as truly days of destiny as any day can be.

In other words, the prevalent distinction between the secular and the religious has utterly broken down. A man who has one code of morals for his home and church, and another for his business, has in fact no morals. A man whose public character is reputable, and his private character vicious, is

without character. A man, even, who would do business for himself, who is indifferent to the welfare of his neighbor, who holds might to be right, who is cruel in competition, who cares not for the city in which he dwells except in those things in which his interests are concerned, and who would leave God and the ministers to look after the world at large, because these are things secular, and those things religious, has no standing ground whatever. He is not simply unmoral; he is immoral. A world so organized would go to ruin. If we are not governing our daily conduct by the code of heaven, we are governing it by the code of hell. There is no third alternative. The commands of God are comprehensive and exclusive. He is in all. All life is His. All that we do is to Him, or you and I are not His in anything.

Consider now for a moment, in the second place, how this thought exalts and ennobles all life.

Here and there we see a life that is beautiful without religion; pure, large-minded, beneficent. How is it to be explained? It is a fact often noticed and commented upon. The late Professor Renan not long since referred to it as a witness of the survival in men of the influences of the past, the home in which they were bred, the faith of their childhood, the stock of which they come. He

speaks of such a man as being in the "shadow" of his past. We might perhaps better say the afterglow. But that is all that can be said. It has no future. The children, the pupils of such a man, will have, as M. Renan points out, only "the shadow of a shadow" as their moral atmosphere. There is no warmth, no impulse, no life in that. It is at best a decadent, evanescent force. Such fine characters in their best estate are but like the fly-wheel of an engine which keeps up its stately motion for a time after the steam has been shut off. It has the semblance of force, but is without productive power.

On the contrary, the Christian, be he high or low, in favorable or in adverse circumstances, if he is a true Christian, a child of God, has God in all his life. He is at his work. You see him there in his office, on the board of trade, at his work-bench, on the railway train, he is living for God ; imperfectly it may be, but none the less truly. His business is large, his mind is full, his hours engrossed, but when the pressure is off, his thoughts spring back erect to God. His true self is there with him at his work, and it is his better self. There is no distinction between them. Call his occupation "secular" if you will : it is for this age (the world must have clothes, and shoes, and railways, and houses to dwell in), it is none the less religious, for it is bound to God. He is a layman—one of the peo-

ple, as distinct from the clergy,—but none the less dedicated to God and God's work, because to him all the people are God's. So this truth ennobles and glorifies common life.

But that this ennobling of life may be to us something more than a sentiment, dear friends, we must live in this way. The Lord has spoken to us. He has opened to us the high place of privilege. Let us then, in the third and last place, ask, "What are some of the tests by which we may know that we are thus following Him?"

"Am I making an excuse of the pressure of business?" Is it leading me to do what I once would not have done? Is it lowering my standard of morals and of character? Is it trespassing upon my duties in my home as a husband and father? Is it drying up the wells of personal religion, shutting me out from prayer and the Bible? Is it keeping me from the prayer-meeting and from church? Is it an excuse from taking a part in the thought, the labor, the giving which are necessary if the cause of God is to go forward in New-York and in the world? That is the first question. Its force lies in the command of Christ to the disciples at the hour when their nets were full.

But furthermore, we must ask ourselves, "In my business am I really living as a Christian?" It is so easy to say that we are Christians, and all we

have is God's, and to be content with registering the declaration.

“ How easier far is devout enthusiasm
Than a good action : and how willingly
Our indolence takes up with pious rapture,
Though at the time unconscious of its end:
Only to save the toil of useful deeds.”

What Lessing thus expressed of himself in Germany, is as true of us to-day in America. Recently a young Christian said to me that one chief obstacle in the way of his religious life is the conduct of the superintendent of the shop in which he works, who is a professed Christian.

Peter and Andrew had to leave their business to follow Jesus. So Jesus calls to many a lad, many a young man, to turn aside from tempting openings for business and enter the ministry. It is a rare privilege. The Lord has need of you as He had of Peter. But all cannot do this. We often think, “If we could only do it, how easy it would be to be disciples, and to win men.” The Lord thinks differently. He needs witnesses in the machine-shop, in the store, in every business, as truly as in the ministry, and that is your duty. There died, not very long since, in New York, a business man of my acquaintance who years ago was living in the West. He was then young and prosperous. He was a Christian of high character and consecration, and the thought came to him that he should

turn aside from business and fit himself for the ministry. He sought counsel of his pastor, who said to him, "No, you have pre-eminent gifts for business. God has so endowed you. Accept the gifts and the responsibility. Do business for God." He took the advice. He set apart at once a certain and a large portion of his income to beneficence; he interested himself deeply and widely in religious things. He lived to advanced life. A uniform and remarkable prosperity attended him, and when Mr. Winthrop Gilman died, the cause of Christianity, as represented by the great Presbyterian Church of the United States, lost one of its wisest and most widely useful men.

Remember, beloved, that God needs you more than He does your work in the world. Ask, then, constantly, "Am I His? Is my heart set on Him? In my affections, my desires, my purposes, my ambitions, am I living for God? is God and His cause my inspiration, my aim?"

"Follow me!" Yes, you, dear friend, who to-morrow must bend yourself to the weary toil of another week. In your counting-room, at your desk, in the factory, with your hands upon a full or a breaking net, Jesus, your Lord, has come to bid you follow Him. Till He releases you, you are to serve Him there. You are to seek no present release. That is the post of high privilege, because the post of present service.

“I will make you fishers of men.” How? By the power of Christ dwelling in you, and speaking through you. “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil,” is our Lord’s prayer for you. Accept your privilege, then, and your service. Take up your business to-morrow, and each day, for God, who has placed you in it. Open your heart and lift up your eyes to the cause of Christ that you may forward it, and try so to live that at last of you it shall be said, “He was one,

“ Who from no task of Christ so’er,
True soldier, sought indulgence.
To him it wore so grand an air,
Was lit with such effulgence,”

because in it you saw Christ, and found an opportunity of serving Him.

GOD AS A PARTNER.

“Neither shall any man desire thy land when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.”—Exodus xxxiv. 24.

GOD AS A PARTNER.

IF there is any promise in the Bible which can be taken as meaning just what it says, it is this. Nothing could be more solemn than the circumstances in which it was uttered. The people had sinned in the matter of the golden calf. The two tables of the law had been broken to pieces, and only in response to Moses' throwing himself into the breach and making supplication for the people, did the Lord refrain from visiting them in judgment, if not consuming them altogether.

But He hearkened to the prayer of His servant. Alone on the smoking mount, while the conscience-stricken people waited in terror at its base, the Lord had passed before Moses, and, covered in the cleft of the rock from the glory which no man can see and live, he had heard repeated the words which answered the broken covenant: "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and to the fourth generation."

Then came the repetition of the commandments as the basis of the new relation between God and His people, coupled with solemn warnings as to keeping them, and the certain, definite, and far-reaching promise of blessing, among which is this of our text. In the new land Israel was to be surrounded with many powerful and rapacious enemies—enemies far too great for their unaided strength. But Jehovah would go with them. He would drive out the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite to give them the land. And, once in it, their sole duty would be to live exactly as God had commanded them, and God would take care of the rest. Among other things, thrice in the year they were to leave their homes and their fields and go up with their children to appear before the Lord in united and public worship. And they were to do it without fear of the enemies that hung about them eager to seize every opportunity to pounce upon their defenceless possessions, for the Lord would be their defence. So complete was to be the protection, that while they were away on the Lord's business there would even be no fighting. The enemy would be made to see the hopelessness of it, and no man would so far desire their land as to venture to lay hands upon it.

“Would that we could trust God to do that nowadays,” some one says. Hard experience has taught us that a man must look out for himself. He must

keep his eye on the main chance, and let no opportunity slip. Religion is all very well. The precepts of the Bible are all right. That is the way to heaven. But for this life theory has to be qualified. Sunday-school politics don't work. Neither does Sunday-school business. You have to fight for what you get. If you go into trade you must follow the laws of trade. If you would succeed in the world, you must meet the world on its own ground and do business with the tools of business. I think I am not putting it too strongly. Business men tell me what their competitors do. Christian men say, "You cannot know what the pressure is until you are in it yourself." Young men are counselled to get ahead when they can. We all feel how much depends upon ourselves. We are tremulous lest we lose some passing opportunity, or lest others will think less well of us because we let it slip. The very women innocently wonder how a man who does not read the Sunday newspaper can get along without the news. The young business man fears if he does not go to the post-office or get his mail on Sunday something may happen, and the older one thinks that unless he disregards Sunday by travelling at one end of the day or the other he will lose something.

Somehow we seem to drop God out ; not professedly but actually. God will care for us ; *i.e.*, if we take good care of ourselves. God's laws are

good and right ; *i.e.*, if you do not apply them too closely, or take them too literally. We may trust in the Lord ; particularly if we have on our side the heaviest battalions. His word will do for a lamp for our feet, especially if we add to it considerable worldly wisdom. How utterly opposed to this is the word of God itself : "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding." "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." "Go up to appear before the Lord thy God" : *i.e.*, take that command as a type of all ; do what He has told you to do ; obey His word just as He has given it—and no man shall desire thy land. Did ever any trust in Him and be confounded?

This is the question, dear friends, we are all called to face! Are we to trim and qualify and walk delicately with the commandments of God, or are we to obey them and leave the rest to God?

Let us point out three or four plain truths, and then make an application.

First of all, I think no one will seriously claim that the earth is so far developed as to have escaped from God's hands. "The earth is the Lord's." He may choose to deal with it in one way or another. We may trace His hand in natural law, or in sudden cataclysm, but that the earth did not create itself and does not run itself is plain. It

was made by God and belongs to God in all its length and breadth, and has not for one instant escaped out of His control. Its forces are His movements. Its laws are simply His ways, whether they be laws of gravitation or laws of trade. The swing of the planets in their courses, and the decomposition of the gray matter in your brain which issues in thought are alike obedient to Him. The silver and the gold—all of it—is His. And so is success in business, and health and prosperity, and fame and triumph over enemies, and the welfare of your family and all that your heart can wish.

It is well to remember this : that not a man can get any one of these possessions, or hold it, except by the will of God. When God undertakes to bestow it upon a man nothing can prevent his having it ; and when God undertakes to withhold it from a man no skill or cunning of his can obtain it. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Why? Because God scatters them. They come again and our cup is full. Why? Because God fills it. And that whether we know the reason or not. Utterly above any use we may make of it is God's ownership of the earth and everything upon it. We may be permitted to understand His ways of dealing with it and with us by and by ; we do not now. But that does not alter the fact that not one least atom of matter, not one least impulse of

force has escaped out of God's sure possession—His absolute control.

Equally sure is it in the second place that God cares infinitely more for men than He does for property. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" is not asked as a conundrum. It is the solemn announcement of the valuation which God puts upon the soul. Without a moment's hesitation Jesus suffers the devils to enter the two thousand swine and destroy them, that the devil may the more readily come out of a man, because He is giving Himself to save men. Doing this, He can regard nothing in the universe for an instant as comparable in value to a man. When the brilliant young McCall of the Livingstone-Congo mission, dying, the other day in mid-work, said, "Lord, I gave myself, body, mind, and soul to Thee. I consecrated my whole being to Thy service, and now if it please Thee to take myself instead of my work which I would do for Thee, what is that to me? Thy will be done!" he only fell back on the truth before us.

Therefore, when God commanded the Israelites to go up to worship Him three times in the year, because it was His peculiar service, and they were to be benefited and brought nearer to Him by it, there was no room for any excuse on the ground that their work was of especial worth to God at home, or that the land which was now the Lord's

needed their watchful presence. The Lord wanted them; the houses He would care for Himself.

Thirdly, we learn from the text that God governs men through their desires. "Neither shall any man desire thy land when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord." Here two things appear—the hearts of God's people are released from a clutching desire after lands and houses and money, that they may be free to serve the Lord; and because God's people have thus committed themselves to God their enemies are withheld by God from so coveting their possessions as to seek to seize them in their absence. "Ah! but that will not work nowadays," you say. "A man has to look sharply after his property or he will lose it. He must protect his interests or he will suffer." Yes, but when you have been never so sharp, what guaranty have you? See how large a percentage of business men sooner or later fail. In spite of all our shrewdness how easily riches take to themselves wings and fly away, and how often, while your regular business, that to which you give your whole thought and strength and all your experience, returns the smallest profits, some chance investment, some mere side interest, of which you have thought little or nothing, makes your fortune! At least this occurs often enough in the business world to show that there are elements in the problem of worldly success which are not tabulated by the mercantile agencies.

God has His hand upon men and upon their property. He plays upon the keys of the human heart and leads men to do this or that as easily and as surely as He "causes it to rain upon the earth where no man is," or brings the seed-time and the harvest.

If, then, it is sure that the earth is the Lord's, that He cares for men infinitely more than for property, and that He governs men through their desires, it is equally sure, in the fourth place, that God can and will give temporal prosperity to His children when it is for their best good. "A hundredfold in this present world," is the word of the New Testament. Not inevitably, or by any hard and fast rule or promise, still less as a bribe, but because He is no mere taskmaster, but a Heavenly Father who delights to bless, and who always gives out of the fullness of His father's hand when it will be a blessing.

The service of our God is not a poor and niggardly service, a service of limitations and restrictions, a service of loss and pain, as it is sometimes conceived. On the contrary, it is a right royal service, the service of the Lord of the universe, who has use for every power and faculty of the least and the greatest of His servants, with abundant reward and satisfying joy for all of them. When He says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you," He means what He says. When

He points to the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, and says, "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed,—for that is what the heathen do,—the men who do not know God or believe in God,—and your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things," ought we not, dear friends, to be willing to believe Him and to trust Him?

And now for a brief application. It is manifestly wise to choose God.

We must make some choice. Here is the earth and here are we. The question is not of heaven, and by and by, but of life and to-day. How are you going to live? No! How are you living now? What is your aim, what your purpose, what are your principles? "Principles? I have no principles; I am in the show business," as the humorist said. Very well, let it be the "show business," or railroads, or dry-goods, or clothing, or flour, or stocks, or provisions, or what you will, you are making your decision over that. My point is that it is wise to choose God in your business. Do not reply, "It is for you, the minister, to look after our souls, and tell us how to get to heaven—we understand business better than you do." I still press upon you, that in the light of the truths we have been considering it is the part of wisdom to take God distinctly and definitely into your business,

and from Monday morning to Saturday night to make your reckoning with Him.

You would count it folly for a chemist to refuse to notice in an analysis an important element which he but imperfectly understands, or for an engineer to leave out of his calculations a present force that is inadequately measured, or for a merchant to ignore influences upon the market that are powerful though hidden. In each instance you would say, "That disregarded element, that unknown quantity, may overthrow all your work," and that, even, in dealing with the simplest affairs and the most appreciable forces. But here is many a one of you thinking it enough that you have mastered the details of your business, or are giving yourself strenuously to the purpose of working out what you choose to call the practical part of your affairs and deliberately disregarding the one decisive influence without which not a wheel moves in the factory, not a thought stirs in the brain, not a purpose reaches its result, not a plan carries its accomplishment, persuading yourself that you can finally succeed without God. You are like the splendid salmon dashing here and there in the broad river, now out of the water, now deep beneath it, now rushing down the stream, now proving his great strength by as easily darting up it, delighting in difficulties, challenging dangers, alike master of all, but never once breaking the slender

line to which he is hooked, never once freeing himself from the power of the master hand that reels him in at last as he wills. Ah, dear friend, it is wise to make your reckoning with God.

So, also, it is safe to trust God. Often you cannot see how things will come out. Before you is the opening door, the glittering temptation. Now is your chance. Catch fortune by the heel. Fickle dame! She may not return. Other people do it. Many will call you a fool if you let it slip. Or, you are already in the mesh, you are doing what you ought not to do. Conscience troubles you, but how can you escape? Here is profit. Here, and it may be here only, is success. Many a business man finds himself so circumstanced. He has been drawn in unwittingly. Perhaps his partner is unscrupulous. Perhaps it is a custom of the trade. Perhaps he was swept into it by the pressure of competition. No matter how it came about. Here he is in a false position, doing dishonest or unchristian things, whatever he may be at home and in church, aloof from God, antagonizing God in his business, and persuading himself that he cannot succeed if he does differently. It is an old snare of the evil one—to get a man into a wrong position and then persuade him there is no way out, or no way except at a great loss. Is the world the Devil's, dear friend, or is it God's? Is it ever safe to do wrong?

It is wise to choose God. It is safe to trust Him, and finally it is best to serve Him.

You may not become rich, you may not prosper, you may not escape want,—God knows what is best for His children,—but you will be blest, you will have peace. God will have in you what He prizes above all else—a man made in His own image, a soul that is His own. How much God needs such men and how much He loves them! By such men as you who know God, and believe God, and trust God, He keeps alive in a sinful and sordid world, a world skeptical of all that is pure and unselfish and good, the knowledge of Himself.

“ Servants of God—or sons,
Shall I not call you ? Because
Not as servants ye know
Your Father’s innermost mind;
His who unwillingly sees
One of His little ones lost.
Yours is the praise, if mankind
Hath not in its march
Fainted and fallen and died.”

And think you that your Heavenly Father will not, cannot provide for you and yours? Go up, then, and appear before Him to-day and every day! Do always and everywhere what in the eyes of men, and in your own heart, will be your testimony to Him, that He is your God, and that you are His child; and you need not fear about your land, no man shall desire it. “For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

BUSINESS IN RELIGION.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”
—DEUT. vi. 5.

“What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”—MARK viii. 36.

BUSINESS IN RELIGION.

IF ever there was a time when a line could be drawn around certain occupations, and it could be said, "Within this line the rules and methods of business prevail, outside of it they do not," that day has passed. In the management of the home, the school, the church, there must be system, order, purpose; in short, a recognition of business and business ways, or success cannot be expected.

This being true in the outer and practical life, it has occurred to me that something may be learned from it for the conduct of the inner and spiritual life. If business means so much and accomplishes so much in the world, may it not have a value if it can be applied to religion?

There are certain great principles that underlie all business and determine success or failure. I have from time to time talked on this subject with many successful business men, and I am surprised to learn what a striking unanimity there is in their testimony. Quite independently of what may be their personal character, or their religious convictions, in the main they all agree as to the principles of business which they regard as essential to success. I am encouraged to believe, therefore, that

these may be helpful in throwing light on religion. They all agree, in the first place, that *to be successful one must have a method, a plan, for the conduct of his business.*

To trust to luck, to work at haphazard, is sure to end in failure. Sometimes this plan is adopted instinctively as a result of a man's character, or his training. One gentleman told me that when they organized their firm he and his partners sat down and in long and careful conference determined the plan by which the business was to be conducted. This is perhaps unusual, as generally only those unite whose methods already harmonize. But plan there must be.

Moreover, the plan, once settled, must be adhered to. It must not be changed under stress of weather or adverse circumstances. A leading miller said to me some time since, "Our plan is to succeed by making the best flour that can be produced. We believe it is the surest way of success. If things go against us, and some one makes better flour, we do not rest until we learn how to improve our grade." Another manufacturer said, "One of our rules is to make a profit on every order we take. If we find we are losing orders we don't change our rule; we study economy until we discover some way of doing the work at a smaller cost." Another has quite a different method. He feels the need of a very wide and large market for his product, and to secure it

he will often sell for a time below cost. But whatever the plan adopted, all agree that to have no plan or to change one's plan from day to day is as disastrous as to change one's business. And for the same reasons. A man cannot be a grocer this year, a dry-goods dealer the next, a banker the third, and hope to succeed. He must commit himself to some one business; fix his plan for conducting it; and then stick to it.

Furthermore, I find in the second place that all agree that *a man cannot succeed without giving his undivided attention to his business.*

He must make a business of it. Very few men can successfully conduct several kinds of business at the same time. New York is full of men who have failed from dabbling in things foreign to their legitimate line. Outside things may be taken up merely for recreation or rest. If they compete with a man's regular business in their demand upon either his time or his thought, they are sure to work him evil. One thing with all the mind, the heart, the strength, appears to be the rule.

But this requires, in the third place, that *a man have a business to which he can give himself.* He must regard it as worthy of his efforts. He must believe in it, and take pride in it.

"We stake all we have on our business," said a manufacturer to me. "We draw out of it only enough to live on, and we are living economically.

We put all we can into our plant." Others stake everything on their plan of accumulation. They sacrifice comfort, ease, sometimes even friends or character itself, to the chosen line of success. A man can hardly hope to succeed in anything unless he puts his heart into it. He cannot put his heart into it unless he believes in it. A man, therefore, must have some business in which he can believe, and of which, as a measure of his success, he can be proud.

Again, I find, in the fourth place, that a *special training is regarded as very essential to business success.*

"It is absolutely indispensable in our business," said one merchant. "We have daily to make decisions on the instant, which largely involve our success or failure. No man can do it who is not trained to the business." "Competition," said another, "is now so close that education in business is going to be a more and more important element of success. It did not require much training when a retailer could make a dollar of profit on a sack of flour. It is a different matter when he has to sell it on a margin of a few cents." Many fail from too great haste to get rich. They are not content with slow accumulations; nor are they willing to begin at the bottom and work up. Patient, steady, constructive growth is more important to-day than it ever was.

Once more : all agree that to succeed *a man must be prompt to adapt himself to changes which from time to time take place both in markets and methods of business.*

One manufacturer said to me, "So great are the changes in our business that I would rather take into my mill a green hand than one who learned the trade ten years ago, and has learned nothing since." Men are everywhere on the lookout for novelties, in fabric, in style, in adaptation. A merchant said, "We used to depend for our trade largely upon advertising. We should soon run out if we did that now. We hunt up customers and keep after them." Even the banks, I am told, have greatly changed their methods of business within recent years.

Again, and this point is somewhat remarkable in view of what is constantly said about the dishonesty of business men. I find that *our successful business men are doing business on the basis of trust in others.* One says, "In our business we get security when we can, but a man cannot do business who does not trust somebody." There is no such thing as trusting no one and succeeding, or doing business on an absolute certainty. Another says, "We do business on the basis of our belief that men are honest. We trust those with whom we deal, absolutely. Our business rests almost entirely upon verbal contracts" Another of whom I inquired,

said, "Certainly, the basis of our business is the confidence we have in others. We never could have succeeded unless others had had this confidence in us." "This is the whole foundation of my business career," said one gentleman with evident feeling. "If men had not trusted me I could have done nothing." The tendency of business seems to establish the principle that a man's word is his capital. It is conclusive proof that the entire structure of commercial enterprise is erected on the doctrine of probabilities. Certainty is not required, and is not to be had. Faith in one another, faith in one's judgment, faith in one's principles and methods of business, is the foundation of every successful career. Unless a man is willing to accept this, and to order his affairs by a reasonable faith, he cannot do business, much less succeed in business.

Still further, I find all to agree that *attention to details* is a first principle of success. One man said to me, "We know what every man in our employ is doing, all the time." Another said, "My partner or myself is familiar with every department of our business. We watch every man and every process. We keep exact account of every item." "We attend more closely to detail," said a manufacturer, "than any other mill in the country." "I mark the price on every article in my store," said another man. "We know exactly what every one of our

salesmen is making for us," said still another. A man content with generalities, or who drifts with the crowd, cannot succeed nowadays.

Finally, I observe that successful business men *are liberal in their dealing with others and exact in their dealing with themselves.*

One man, who holds himself to the most careful rules, and prides himself upon his exact accountability, and that of every man in his employ, says that as a matter of policy his firm makes it a rule to settle every claim liberally, even when it involves temporary loss. It promotes good-will and helps business. Another says, "We give a customer the benefit of the doubt." And another, though I fear his kind is rare, "We could get our labor considerably cheaper, but we want the good-will of our men." It seems to be a rule of successful business, especially on the largest scale, that while a man can hardly be too generous in his business dealings with others, and that narrowness or closeness in this relation is sure to defeat itself, in dealing with oneself a man can hardly be too exacting. He must have himself always in hand. He must know his own purposes; he must constantly revise his knowledge and keep his experience brought down to date; he must deny himself in leisure, in luxury, in ease. He must have an aim and a plan and hold to them. He must concentrate his mind, his strength, his heart upon what he has to do, or

he cannot succeed. It is no wonder that when a man does business in this way he takes pride in his business. He may at times get discouraged and talk differently, but where is there a successful business man who, beyond the money he is making, does not take pride in his business, his factory, his store, his system, as representing himself in his effort to do his best?

There, I believe you have what you will recognize as the more important principles that underlie successful business life. The list might easily be enlarged. Doubtless there are other rules or principles of more immediate application to your own especial affairs. But these are enough, and they are genuine. Now let me ask you to turn with them to the matter of religion.

First answer me this, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Don't turn away from it. You have said that a man must choose an object in life, and set his heart upon it. You have said that it must be an object worthy of him, worthy of his best efforts, worthy of all there is in him; or he cannot do his best, he cannot hope fairly to succeed. Before we go any further, answer me this: You successful business man, you young man who would be successful. You have made your choice, you are in full career, you have staked everything gladly, willingly, on your business or your pro-

fession ; tell me what will it profit you, where you will be at the end, if you gain all you seek—and lose your own soul ?

Again, you have said, a man must have a fixed and earnest purpose ; a plan, clear and intelligent, if he would succeed in business—how many of you are applying this principle to religion ? I ask you unconverted men, and you who are contented with a merely nominal religion. Have you a plan, a purpose ? You have wishes, hopes ! You mean, some day, to be a different man from what you are. How different this from your method in the affairs of the world. Where is your honest, manly purpose ? Where is the settled plan by which you are approaching steadily, surely, with the determination to succeed, the salvation of your soul ? You meant once to be a Christian. You once were in earnest, and you have grown cold. You were offended by the conduct of some Christian. You did not like what was said in the pulpit. You were not pleased at the prayer-meeting. And you are the man who says that a man cannot succeed in business who does not stick to his purpose and hold his plans no matter what arises to thwart him. You were once in full view of Christianity. Where are you now ? What is your purpose now ?

A man must give his undivided attention to his business if he would succeed in it. “Undivided attention !” “Ye shall seek for me and find me

when ye shall search for me with all your heart." That looks as if the method of religion were very much like the method of business, does it not? You know the conditions of success in business, and you are only too eager to meet them. Do you meet them, are you meeting them in religion? Why do you go on from year to year in this half-hearted, slow-footed way, hanging on the skirts of the sanctuary, keeping within reach of the Gospel, but without paying any real attention to it? Doing nothing to make it real to yourself?

You say, a man, to succeed, must stake something on his business; he must believe in it. How much have you staked on Christianity? "If Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Can you say that? Has Jesus Christ risen for you? Have you staked the forgiveness of your sins, and the hope of heaven, on Him as a living, present Saviour, dwelling in your heart, inspiring and governing your life? Don't put the question aside. Answer it fairly.

You say, a man must have training in business. How much have you in religion? How much are you trying to get? Do you really believe your maxim? Is a man's place, is his joy, his usefulness, his growth in spiritual things to be determined, as in business, by his training for these things? Is it true that the nobler the work a man would do, the

higher the prize he would win, the more necessary the spiritual training? Is it true that in religion early years are best years, and that a man can never make up for early years thrown away, or Bible neglected, or opportunities squandered, or commands of God disobeyed, or God kept far off? Is all this true? Deep in your heart do you know it to be true? And yet you are content to put off becoming a Christian, or content not to be a truer one?

You say, a man must be watchful of changes in methods of business. And how many of you are waiting for some old-time experience to come round again? Once you were stirred by some great preacher, and you are patiently waiting now to be stirred by some powerful appeal. Once you were caught up in a great revival and swept on to the very gates of the kingdom. You sit there helpless to-day, waiting a return of the wave. Once you were under deep conviction of sin. God strove with you manifestly. The fountains of your heart were broken up, but you held out until the springs ran dry. Once you were interested in the Christian life and service. Now you are waiting for that witness to come back to life. Thus in one way and another you excuse yourselves.

Why, dear friends, does business refuse to go round in a circle? Why do things happen but once, and nothing repeat itself? Are the drowsy and the careless left behind, and is there no progress

in God's ways ; has His voice only one call, is there no present requirement, no living, earnest, present necessity upon you if you would enter the kingdom of heaven? "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" What does that mean except that you are to arise at once? "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." What does that mean except you are to decide—to be wholly Christ's—now?

This is God's method, to lay responsibility upon us each for himself, to address us thus personally, as I am trying to address you, and to say, "Arise, follow me." Shake off your lethargy. Make your decision, and do it now.

You have said a man must act upon probabilities. No business can be done otherwise. And there is no religion apart from faith. God says, "Trust me. There is my word ; believe it, obey it, and thou shalt live." But you say, "I am not convinced. I want a certainty. I do not yet understand it all. I do not see through to the very end." No, you never will, and in your daily affairs you never do. Things are not so constituted.

Exactly in the line of what we have shown to be the underlying principle of daily life — namely, TRUST,—God draws us to Himself. We are to believe in Him ; and because we believe in Him we are to give ourselves to Him.

Have you done it? Come down to details. Look into your life, and into your heart. Are you living

for God, really, truly? Not, are you professing to? But are you doing it? Are you looking after your motives, your purposes, your thoughts, your words? Are all made to tell for God and for Christ because you are His? If not, what?

You could not succeed in business otherwise; can you serve God, can you be truly His, without the same watchfulness of little things?

Be as liberal as you will in your judgments of others; are you exact with yourself? Ah, dear friends, how many deceive themselves here. You do not believe in the eternal punishment of the impenitent sinner. You do not believe that God is angry with the wicked every day. Woe to you if you are taking advantage of your liberality to others to apply this doctrine to yourself. Where is the man who could hope to succeed in business on that principle? You never do it. You hold yourself to strictest accountability. You do not rest until you make every uncertainty tell in your favor. Suppose the word of God is TRUE. Suppose, that except a man believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and go into the other world His servant, His child, he cannot be saved; what then, dear friend? Where will you stand? You are dealing with a righteous as well as a loving God. An account is to be given to Him. Are you ready for it?

And are some of you ashamed to be Christians? You rejoice in your business. You are proud to

be identified with it. You want to be known as one of the merchants, one of the manufacturers, one of the business men of New York. You hesitate to be known as one of the Christians of New York. Is there anything nobler? There goes A. B., one of our merchants, one of our lawyers, one of our bankers; yes, but more than that, and before all that, one of our CHRISTIANS,—a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. A prominent believer; a conspicuous one. Why? Because his whole life proclaims it. He is a Christian with a purpose. He believes in his religion; he stakes everything upon it; he lives up to it; he glories in it. And when he dies the town will lose in him, before all else, a man who loved the Lord Jesus Christ and faithfully served Him. Is not that something worth living for? Will you not then, after this fashion, carry your business into your religion? Begin to be a Christian now, and be such a Christian that the angels and the little children may be glad over you.

RELIGION IN BUSINESS.

“Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked ; it shall be ill with him ; for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”—ISAIAH iii. 10-11.

RELIGION IN BUSINESS.

I AM to speak to you this morning upon "Religion in Business." Let me disclaim at the outset the thought of possessing any special wisdom with reference to business affairs. I have no prescription for ensuring success. Religion in business does not mean success in business. No amount of religion will make afterthought serve for forethought, or erroneous judgment take the place of correct judgment, or heedlessness do the work of painstaking, or ignorance answer for experience. Religion does not make the small great, or the simple shrewd, or the weak strong, or the sick well, or the foolish wise—at least not in business.

But for all that, God's word abundantly declares that there is a very close connection between business and religion. If there is one thing plainer than another in the Bible it is that God makes a difference between honesty and dishonesty, and that He rewards men according to their deeds. Whatever may be the relative standing of men upon earth, God tries them by their integrity, or want of integrity, and blesses the one while He curses the other.

Here, then, is the ground on which I have some-

thing to say to you this morning. I have not to teach you how to make money, but how to serve God.

Furthermore, let me say that I know something of your burdens and perplexities. Far be it from me to make light of them. Because the world at large knows what are the temptations of business men, the world gives high honor to honorable men of business. Christian men are the backbone of the business community. I well remember when, as a boy, I was a clerk in a great house down-town, hearing a fellow-clerk, an infidel and a foreigner, curse because in New York, if a merchant was known to be a church-member, he had better credit. What was it but his unwilling testimony to the fact that the average Christian business man is more trustworthy than the average business man not a Christian. We may praise God that it is so generally true.

At the same time we must not be blind to the struggle. All do not stand. Temptations are hot. The pressure is often terrific. Many get involved in doubts and perplexities and weak compromises. Many fall. What can we do to clear the vision, to brace the courage, to strengthen the purpose? How can we help one another to serve God bravely, each in his place?

Let me put what I have to say in the form of a few propositions which will, I trust, need but little discussion, and may serve to make some things clearer.

First, you will all admit that religion in business is the same as religion out of business.

When God says, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," He does not add, "Except the sin be a commercial sin." When He says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself," He does not say, "Except you are in business." When a man approaching the question of personal religion feels as most do, that he must begin to do business differently, his feeling is perfectly correct. There are not two standards of morality : one for private life and Sundays, and the other for business and week days ; one for the pulpit, the other for the street.

Christianity has but one code of morals. I know it is often claimed that there are two, and if this proposition were opened to discussion a good deal would be urged about the necessity of doing business in a different way from that enjoined in the New Testament, and that many Christian men do business in that way. But when all is said, there remains in your heart the deep conviction that there can be but one right way, and you despise the man who, professing to be a Christian, departs from it. Religion in business is the same as religion out of business.

Second, if a man's religion does not keep him honest, it is worthless.

This does not mean, "If a man's religion does

not keep him as honest as other men are in the same business." Nor, "If a man's religion does not keep him honest when dishonesty is likely to be found out." It carries the question back to the forum of a man's own conscience, and the laws of God. If a man's religion does not hold him to doing that and that only which is right in God's sight, and which needs no justifying, his religion is so far worthless.

He may be a decent man ; he may be a successful man ; he may be an honest man, as the world counts honesty ; but a religious man—a Christian man—no !

The sole function of religion is to bring a man in heart and life into accord with God, and to keep him there, and any man whose religion does not hold him to that standard, in business or out of it, is self-deceived.

I do not say he may not at last be forgiven. God's uncovenanted mercies are great. But such religion as a present reality, and as a witness to God, is vain.

Third, there is no honest occupation in which an honest man is required to be dishonest.

I speak of honest men, not of those who would like to be honest, but are not. There are such men, who approve honesty, who deeply regret that they are in circumstances which compromise them, who mean some day to do differently, and who are

very anxious to be taken, like a patent medicine, at their estimate of themselves. Such men, I know, are often engaged in honest occupations in which they think they are required to be dishonest. But I am speaking of honest men ; and of them I say, that in no honest occupation are they required to be dishonest.

Why! dear friends, God made the world, and He made it right. We are here to till the earth and to subdue it. God has established the conditions of successful existence. You talk of the laws of trade. So far as there are laws—*i. e.*, fixed relations from which sound principles of procedure can be deduced,—they are as truly God's laws as are the Ten Commandments. God has not made the earth, and then left it to be set to any purpose and used for any iniquitous device that man may concoct. It is His world. He is everywhere in it, guiding, controlling, accomplishing with it His own purpose, as truly now as at the beginning. Despite the loss and confusion from man's wrong-doing, the world is steadily advancing in the accumulations of industry and all that constitutes temporal progress.

Compare our circumstances with those of our ancestors, say five hundred years ago. Their floors had no carpets, their rooms no chairs, their windows no glass, their tables no forks, their houses no books. Society meant the unrestrained domin-

ion of the strong over the weak. The laborer lived in a hovel and slept on the ground, was unshod and almost unclad. Within the memory of men now living steam in all its thousand applications, electricity, illuminating gas, coal oil, stoves, anthracite coal, cheap postage and transportation; dress goods printed from rollers, cheap cotton fabrics and scores of articles now in common use, have been either invented or given to the world. The average comfort and the average possessions of men have vastly increased; and that despite all that men by war and crime have done to prevent it. The poorest laborer enjoys many things daily which one hundred years ago the wealthiest man could not obtain. Can you suppose for a moment that this vast advance, this steady and rapid accumulation of the best products of industry and skill, is the result of fraud or dishonesty, or is the outcome of obedience to laws, whether they be of trade or of the State, which are antagonistic to the laws of God? Doubtless there is much rascality in the world. Doubtless, "Because," as of old, "sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is wholly set in them to do evil." But two things cannot be denied: that God made the world, and men to live in it; and that the world, according to God's plan, is steadily advancing in the accumulations of man's industry and the facilities of man's life.

Therefore, progress cannot rest upon dishonesty. The occupations of men by which the world is helped forward are honest occupations, and honest men can engage in them and deal honestly. It is idle for a man to say that he cannot succeed in business and be honest. It is untrue. The whole history of the race is against it. Why have vice and immorality eaten out the heart, and so destroyed nations which the most vigorous foes could not overthrow? It is because vice and immorality arrayed God against them, and the very forces of life and of society which God has established, and which they disregarded or defied, mustered to destroy them.

Is not this just as true of dishonesty as of vice? Where is there a single business house that has been built up and stood through the centuries buttressed in dishonesty? There is not one. The very thought is absurd. The hosts of God are arrayed against such business, and sooner or later they hurl it to the ground. Has not the world long since recognized this? Has it not framed for its own selfish ends the maxim, "Honesty is the best policy"? Victor Hugo said Napoleon failed at Waterloo, not because of the rain the previous night, not because of Grouchy's delay; but because he "embarrassed God." So business men fail when they think they can insure success by business methods that embarrass God.

Fourth, any occupation in which a man cannot

be honest, or thinks he cannot be honest, and succeed, is for him a nefarious occupation, and he should quit it.

God does not require that we succeed in what we undertake. He does require that we maintain our character. If we find ourselves placed where we cannot do that, our course is perfectly plain. The occupation, be it what it may, is for us nefarious. It is of no consequence who may be in it, or what others may think of the propriety of it; if you are persuaded that you cannot succeed in the business in which you are engaged without doing what in your heart you feel to be dishonest, your duty is, at any cost, promptly to get out of it.

Now, with these propositions before us, which I believe to be, and which I think you will accept as foundation truths, let me try to say some things which will strengthen you against temptation.

I believe that loose business habits have much to do with loose business morals.

What are the loose business habits? They are numerous. Trusting to luck is one of them. Hoping that things will come out right when you don't take the trouble to see that they do. Ignorance as to exact facts. Half-understood and indefinite agreements. Carelessness as to your spoken word. Promising to do or agreeing to do what you have no thought of doing exactly. Easy excuses with yourself for disregarding other people's interests,

or wasting their time in not keeping your appointments to the minute. That slovenliness in dealing with employees which takes no note of idleness and incompetency, and equally fails to appreciate fidelity and to reward valuable service. Overlooking the human element that enters into all work and trade, and makes a friend worth more than temporary profit. Foolish competition that thinks it does not matter how you get your business provided you get it. Untruthful advertising.

Do you think a man can tell lies in the newspaper, or in his circulars to his trade, without becoming careless of truth, and even blind to truth in other relations? Do you think a merchant can deceive his customers without teaching his clerks to deceive both them and him? A self-respecting man does not easily fall before temptation. A business man who has himself well in hand can generally keep his business in hand.

A second snare to business men is moral cowardice.

Bear with me. I must call things by their right names. I want to help you if I can. I know something of the pressure that you are under. You feel that you must succeed. You have a family to support, or a position to establish. You know that for a man of character to fail is to inflict a more or less serious evil on the community. It brings Christian character into question; it does harm to

religion. The cause of his failure may have been entirely beyond his control. The world only knows that he has made engagements which he cannot meet, and his name is dishonored. You are under obligation, therefore, to succeed.

Moreover, you are in competition with unscrupulous men, or perhaps you happen to be in partnership with them. They are found in all departments of business. Men who know no law but self-interest ; they care nothing for God ; they have no conscience ; they misrepresent goods ; they deceive the public ; they hesitate at no mean advantage ; they jump at the chance to work you harm. I know all this. But for this very reason the temptation to moral cowardice is strong. The pressure is so great you are carried away in spite of yourself. Satan springs upon you sudden temptation. He touches you in the sensitive spot. Your trade will be injured. A customer may be won away, and in the fear of thus giving advantage to competitors in a struggle that is so hot, you betray yourself. You let down or hide your principles. You give place to the devil. It is, perhaps, little to be wondered at, but, dear friends, it is none the less disastrous.

A rival manufacturer is adulterating his goods ; how can you afford to sell a genuine article ? A dangerous competitor has opened a line of trade from which you have scrupulously held aloof. You

could strain a point, and call it legitimate, but hitherto you have not done it. Your conscience would not let you. But it is very profitable.

Or you can advance your work, or gain a little advantage by having your clerks work on Sunday, or by getting your mail on Sunday ; or you consent to work on Sunday yourself. Or you learn that your neighbor has discovered a trick by which he gets great advantage, we will say, of the railroad company. His shipping tickets give wrong weights ; he overloads cars ; he ships goods under false descriptions ; he secures wrong classification. He pays commission on surreptitious rebates ; or perhaps he sells his goods by bribing the purchasing agent. Now, shall you not do the same ?

Or you have suffered loss through fraud or theft, and it will cost you some trouble, and possibly further loss, to punish the wrong-doer, and do your part toward protecting the community.

Or the community is seeking to rid itself of some public evil, and there is occasion for united protest ; and you may lose trade and offend some customer if your name is seen with others, if your voice is heard on the side of the public welfare. I have known wealthy business men, Christian men, to hasten to take their names off such protests, or asseverate that they signed them through a misunderstanding, when they had been published, because they were suddenly alarmed. " We sell our mer-

chandise, not our principles," said one indignant merchant to some customers who waited upon him after such a protest had been signed. The snares of Satan are innumerable, and many a weak and timid soul is beguiled. How cheaply many men sell themselves! But Satan is a coward. I received, the other day, a communication from a detective agency which had as a standing heading these words, "Responsible shadows and private watchmen furnished." That is exactly what is wanted. A responsible shadow, and a private watchman! Christian men who watch the workings of their own thoughts, and with such a sense of exact accountability that the very beginnings of temptation are discovered, and whose shadow even is responsible. They do nothing, however unwittingly, of which they have reason to be ashamed.

Once more. The community at large owes it to business men that the temptation to dishonesty be made as slight as possible.

This in several ways. You should refuse to trade with dishonest men. It is not enough that you are honest yourself. You have not done your whole duty until you have striven to make honesty successful by boycotting dishonesty.

If a man can cheat you, and still have your custom; if a firm can be notoriously untruthful and dishonest, and still hold a large business and make plenty of money, and nobody seem to care so long

as goods can be had of them cheap, what wonder that the defense of honest tradesmen is broken down, and business turned into a headlong scramble for shekels.

For the same reason the community owes it to business men that they make the laws such as to remove and not increase the temptation to dishonesty. I have nothing to say as to the inherent desirability and wisdom of the Interstate Commerce laws—but look at the situation as it has been under this law. I recently sat in a company of most respectable merchants, and heard one of their number say, “You know that three-fourths of you gentlemen could be sent to the penitentiary for what you are doing under that law.” And what was the reply? A gentle and genial smile around the circle. Not a word, not a look, not a hint of indignant protest at such an amazing charge!

A prominent railway official, a gentleman and a Christian, said to me not long since, “It is simply impossible to do business honorably. I have thrown honor to the winds.” Think of a community getting into a condition in which its greatest corporations, the railways, and its merchants alike unite to do business by evasions, and subterfuges, and go-betweens, and rebates, and greenbacks carried around in satchels and passed through clerks into the hands of reputable merchants! Such a system would have made apples and a serpent superfluous

in the Garden of Eden. It would breed a race of knaves anywhere. Though recent decisions have relieved the pressure, the law remains.

Then when you have proper laws, you need to set honest men to administer them. Look at the state of things to-day in New York. This great city left year by year in the hands of a gang of thieves; the very Legislature of the State the instrument of doing its will. Our local courts are a mockery of justice, our police a system of constant oppression. No man is safe in person or property or business. Money or a "pull" carries everything. Women are assaulted, men are kicked about, even in the court-room; petty tradesmen are bled by officials of every grade, and no man can do business without exposure to all sorts of obstructions and blackmail. Whole departments of the municipal administration are so corrupt as to be notorious. "Of course, what do you suppose we are here for?" was the answer of an official the other day to one of our business men, inquiring if he was expected to pay for a mere matter of routine sanction, to which he was entitled freely. The most sacred right a man has is the right to choose his religious faith, and we see that right imperilled. In New York a public man is not free to join the Roman Catholic Church without the suspicion that he is doing it for office or influence. And you lawyers and business men talk lightly of these

things, as if they could not be helped, and adjust yourselves to them complacently in the calm consciousness that you at least are safe.

Much more might be said, but surely this is enough to show how great are the responsibilities of a Christian business man, and how great are his privileges. He is a man chosen of the Lord, and set by Him in the midst of a sinful and rebellious world to witness for Him. Honor and truth and righteousness are on His side. He is in the forefront of the battle. Yes, you, dear friends, are standard-bearers for Christ. What if the conflict is hot? What if the smoke of battle fills the air? What if many fall? "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." "Set yourselves, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you," is the Lord's voice to you to-day, as it was to the men of old. Only be true to your calling.

Remember that there is woe to him that gains an evil gain, for he sins against his own soul. Watch well your conscience. Respect its questionings. Guard yourself against haste to be rich. A large business is a large trust; be sure you can be trusted before you set your heart on the large business. Many a man loses his head in a high place who walked safely when he was in a low one. I have known more than one to reverse the parable.

He got along very well so long as the Lord gave him only one pound. When he found himself possessed of ten he went to pieces.

Your wives have a great deal to do with this. When the wife gets into her head the idea that her husband is going to be a rich man, and begins to urge him on, then there is peril. How often your plain, hard-working, unambitious husband who was but now generous, friendly, helpful to all, is seen becoming with prosperity close, selfish, and vain-glorious. The Lord gives such people the desire of their heart, and sends leanness into their soul. "A snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction and perdition!" It is well not to be too eager for success. You may be sure of wealth of character without fear, but wealth and character come not surely together. A Christian business man may well be proud of such success as God gives him; and may rightly pray that God will suffer him to die in the harness. He needs no larger field to fight his fight, and win his crown for God.

BUSINESS AND CHRISTIAN SERVICE

“I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.”—JOHN XV. 5.

BUSINESS AND CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

I WANT to set before you to-day not so much the duty, as the privilege of the life of a Christian. It is the privilege of service; a service accepted of the Lord and fruitful in His kingdom. I want to show you that such a service is not the privilege of the favored few; but that it is the high calling of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ; no matter how limited their gifts or how pressing their cares.

You will recognize the text as from our Saviour's farewell address to His disciples. The little company had, perhaps, paused in the court of the house where in the upper chamber they had just celebrated the supper, and where the Saviour had spoken the comforting and tender words of the 14th chapter of John, in order that they might hear further from Him before they go out to face the final separation.

His words turn upon the essential relation that is henceforth to exist between Him and His disciples. "I am the true vine," is His first word. There are other vines of which we are branches, but this is the true vine from which alone comes the fulness of the life that we all need. "I am the vine," He repeats, "ye are the branches." The

word describes the relationship so characteristically as to need no explanation. The branch is nothing apart from the vine. The proof of its life and character is the fruit it is to bear. In this condescending grace in which God has given His Son to come into the world, the fruit borne by those who are joined to Him is to be, not straggling, or haphazard or unworthy, but the "much fruit" which shall be worthy both of the branch and of the vine that bears it. The service of the Christian is to be the joy of his Lord, and his own crown and reward.

The question before us is, how can business men so take up Christian service that it shall be the measure of their fidelity to Christ?

I am not going to speak of the worth of unconscious influence. That is always important. We will admit at once all that may be said for it as the paramount influence of the Christian. If the atmosphere which a man carries about with him is not Christian; if he does not seem filled with the spirit of love and honor, and truth, and gentleness and self-discipline—in short, with the spirit of Christ—his spoken words and his active service profit little. This was the chief characteristic of our Saviour. He did many wonderful works. He uttered words which still hold the attention of the world; but more than His words or His works was the manifest spirit that filled Him. This was what

lifted Him above all other men, and gave meaning to His works and weight to His words.

No man can be an efficient follower of the Lord Jesus Christ who has not caught something of His spirit, and whose silent and unconscious influence does not convince others that the life of Christ is indeed hid in his heart. But it is not of this that we are to speak to-day.

Nor am I to speak of the moral value of a business man's daily work. The disciples were called to be fishers of men, but that meant something more than the testimony they were to give to Christ while fishing for fish.

Six days in the week you are to do business, and you must do it with all your heart and strength. That God approves of the business of life is shown by the fact that most men must needs be engaged in it all their days, and that it stands in such important relations to the individual happiness, no less than to the individual's worth in the world. The business man certainly has no reason to apologize for his work, either to the Lord or to himself. God is served in the toil of the men who plow the fields, or grind the grain, or weave the fabric, or build the houses, or distribute the products, or carry on the exchange, or heal the sick, or grade the streets, or guide the State, or administer the laws, or do anything useful in the complicated work of daily life. The progress of the world in its long

path from creation to glory is so forwarded; and God shows us that this work is dear to Himself and worthy of His eternal thought, in that He has planned it all from the beginning, and is not wearied with the daily care of it, and has connected it so vitally with the sum of human happiness, which is the counterpart of His own.

You men and women who are harnessed to the car of daily toil, whatever form that toil may take, may be at rest in the thought that you are employed in God's great workshop, and though you may not be permitted to see the relation of your labor to the final result, it has a relation intimate and constant. Each man has his assigned task. The work in your hands, however small and insignificant it may be, is in the Master's eye an important part of the whole. You do your work and get your daily wage, and you may have the sweet consciousness that in performing that daily task you are as truly doing the Lord's work—if you are doing it wisely and well—as if you were one of the swift spirits who are His unseen messengers, or the perfected saints who serve Him night and day in His heavenly temple.

Jesus has forever exalted all toil by the thirty years He spent in the carpenter's home; those mysterious years in which, engaged in manual labor, He hid Himself among the common people that in the weariness and care and dull routine of daily

toil, He might know our life as it is the lot of the vast multitude of men and women, and that He might be known to us all as one like ourselves. And when the hour came for the public service, with its startling miracles and burning discourses ; when the hands were freed from their daily tasks, and the form stood erect with the consciousness of its divine message, and the face glowed with the light of another world, He would not escape the common burden, but is to be seen through those surcharged years of the public ministry ever solicitous for the temporal welfare of the little company gathered about Him. He is thoughtful of their daily maintenance. He provides for their needed rest, He secures for them a house of entertainment, He washes their travel-soiled feet. He never asks to be relieved from these humble ministries in order that He may devote Himself to a more absorbing task. He is Himself the picture of the ideal life of His truest servants ; finding opportunity for the largest service amid the humblest duties ; exalting the call of God in ministering to the needs of the lowly and the weak. Let us not be betrayed into neglecting the tasks of daily life, however wearied the frame, or however jaded the mind. You are as truly serving God in the counting-house and in the factory, in the home and in the shop, as you could serve Him in the pulpit or on the mission-field. "The earth is the Lord's and the

fulness thereof,"—and the work of the world, and the increase of its fulness may be a direct tribute to the praise of its Maker.

But not of this service are we speaking to-day. Our theme is a call upon business men for a specifically Christian service, as properly demanded of every one. This alone satisfies the meaning of the text. The "much fruit," which the Saviour announced as the characteristic of His disciples, is evidently something for which all are to strive as a definite and honored privilege ; a tribute to their Lord and a reward and joy to themselves.

This must be so, because this was the chief aim of the Saviour's own work. He came to do the Father's will by a certain distinct and positive service which should proclaim His Father, and bring in His reign in the earth. For this He fitted Himself. The duties of home, the daily tasks, the hours of study and of thought, the years in Nazareth, valuable as they were in ripening His own growing character, and powerful as a testimony to the world about Him, are to be understood only as so much preparation for the more definite service to which He was consecrated. The purpose which controlled His life was to give Himself with that activity and definite purpose to doing the Father's will which could only be satisfied when each day should show some new opportunity entered, some new testimony borne, some new task achieved which

should count at once and positively upon the progress of the kingdom. For this He was born, and to this He gave Himself. All else was incidental. If, then, we are to be His disciples nothing short of this will answer the requirement.

The Christian business man, if he is to be true to his Master, must have a purpose not unlike the Master's for specific service. Indirect or casual results will not suffice. We can only be like Christ when the ruling motive of Christ occupies the same place in our hearts as in His, and when we find ourselves in unrest, unless we are able to do something which shall contribute definitely to the cause of God. We want to show that we are entirely His, and that we are His at all times ; that we carry His love in our hearts, and the thought of His cause in our minds always, and are ever eager for opportunity to serve Him.

Wholly apart from the need of our work, or of its relation to the progress of the kingdom of God on the earth, is the question of *our personal relation to Christ*. Except His spirit be in us we are not His, and this was the characteristic of His spirit that He was animated with the purpose of service. We cannot be truly His, or in the language of the text, cannot "abide in Him," unless we are filled with the same desire to bear much fruit ; that is, to do those things which shall result in a direct benefit to the cause of God.

But, furthermore, the account which the Saviour gives of the *relation of His kingdom to the world* requires of all this specific service. A war is waging between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of Christ. In warfare all contribute. All do not go to the battle ; but all are to the measure of their ability engaged in winning the victory, and every citizen, however remote from the field of strife, or however absorbed in his daily toil, is fully conscious of the issues that are at stake, and eager to do his part to determine the result. When a war involves a whole nation, and is for victory or death, every one does his part and does it eagerly, and with purpose.

Christ is at war with the powers of this world. It is a war for the souls of men. It involves all who are born. It goes on through the centuries. Multitudes for whom Christ died are perishing. Multitudes very dear to Him are in hourly peril. Every Christian is summoned to service as a soldier, and, as a soldier, is warned to be armed and ready and resolute. No laggard service will answer. The enemy is everywhere. The line of battle now advances, and now falls back. Brilliant victories are won, and bright hopes vanish. The call is always for better service, braver, more devoted, more intense. Only so is the final triumph to be secured. It would surely seem that only they who heed the call, and give heart and hand to the cause,

can truly count themselves as enlisted with the Lord.

Furthermore, *the conditions of personal growth* seem to require active Christian service. The alternative of the text is, as St. Augustine sharply put it, "*Aut vitis aut ignis*," either the vine or the fire. We must bear fruit, or be cast into the fire and be burnt. If we do not serve Christ, we cannot grow with Christ, and if we do not grow with Christ, we are worthless to Christ.

This proves itself in many ways. A Christian life without definite Christian service is sure to be a selfish life, and a selfish life becomes quickly an un-Christian life. Moreover, the cares of the world increase with advancing years. Business becomes more absorbing, whether or not it becomes larger. The business man who has no definite Christian work, or accepts no Christian trust, finds himself more and more absorbed in the routine and details of business and of the world. His heart becomes filled with these things, and religion is crowded out. Christian service, therefore, becomes a necessity in order that there may be a free Christian growth. Only so are we kept close to those interests of the Lord's cause which by our care for them enlarge our understanding and soften our heart and keep fresh our interest in our fellows. The world of business is charged with self-interest. It dominates us, it hardens us, it sets us in antagonism with others,

and in spite of ourselves it tends to blight and destroy all that is best in the soul.

All business men need then all the help they can get to protect themselves against these influences.

I will not soon forget an appeal that I heard before a company of 400 business men a few months ago, by a business man then advanced in life and soon to die ; as upon the spur of the moment, in response to an invitation to speak, he appealed as with the face and tongue of a prophet to those younger men, for their own sake, and their families' sake, and for the sake of all that was best in their lives, that every one of them should have some definite Christian service to which he could give his heart and thought. He referred to his own experience. He had begun life a stranger in a strange city; and young man as he was, had been put in charge of a large force of mechanics. The alternative was forced upon him at once to seek his own comfort and interest, or devote himself to the spiritual care of others. He made his choice, and for upwards of fifty years of most active business, burdened with imperfect health and pressed incessantly by a multitude of commercial cares, he had never ceased to have in hand some definite Christian work—a church for his men, or a mission Sunday-school, or a great Bible-class, or a ministry among the poor, to which he not only devoted a part of the Sabbath, but which was on his mind and heart during the week.

And now, at the close of life, honored by all, with great institutions grown up as the result of his labors, to live long after he is gone, with multitudes who loved his face and honored his name, he pleaded with those younger men, for the sake of Christ, themselves, and their families to follow his example. It ought not to be a strange tale to any of you, for New York has never been without similar testimony, and the most honored names in this city in the past have been those who have lived just such lives.

And now, I beg you to observe that the ordinary excuses that business men offer are not valid. Many say they are too busy for more than they are doing. In one sense that is doubtless true; but whether a man is too busy or not depends upon his strength, and his strength depends in no small degree upon his spiritual life. If you business men could only understand how much better you are prepared for the work of the week by a Sabbath which has been somewhat engrossing, compelling the mind to turn aside from business thoughts by the eagerness of its new interest on that day, more of you would be engaged in specific Christian service. The business man who idles away the Sabbath because he needs rest finds himself on Monday morning in a very different condition from what he would have been had he come to the Sabbath anticipating a new draft upon his heart and

eager to receive the refreshment that is found in the devotion of the mind to a new and satisfying toil.

There is often no condition so perilous to the over-tired mind as an effort for idle vacuity. The wheels of the brain will not stop running. The thoughts of the week will not down at one's bidding. With hands idle and body resting the jaded mind is defeated by its own weakness. It wears itself out with the recurring questions of the week which in the idleness of Sunday it has not the opportunity of settling. A man who is working in his office to the full measure of his power during the week, more than any other, needs the refreshment of an entire change when he turns away from it, and for most men this change can only be secured by a change of occupation as exacting as some consecrated Christian service. If Christian men took this view of the case, the work of our philanthropies, and especially of our churches, would not be done so carelessly, and with so little thought, as in so many instances it is now.

Some say they have no gift for Christian service; and some, no opportunity; and some think themselves not fitted; and some say that no one can do everything, and that we hire the minister for that work. To one and all the answer of the Saviour comes, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Every one has his gift. Every one may have his oppor-

tunity and fitness. Every one may bear fruit that shall be "much," as related to the total, and to his opportunities, if he will.

Now, the Lord calls us all to set aside these excuses, and to be willing to do what we can, and to do it with purpose and force. Because such service is the bond of union with Himself, because it is what is meant by membership in His kingdom, because it is the condition of personal growth, and finally because it is the only means by which the church of God is to fulfill its task in the world.

The glory of the cause of Christ is that in all the centuries it has found multitudes of men who, while engaged in their daily avocations, have yet found abundant opportunity for Christian service. The pattern was set by the apostles themselves, who could be fishermen or tentmakers and still perform their divinely appointed tasks. In no century has it received more splendid service from business men than in that which is now closing. The Christian business man of the 19th century is almost a new type in civilization, and he certainly has achieved a new glory for the church of Christ.

What a long row of brilliant names our churches now possess, of men, who through long business lives, with hands filled with the world's work, have yet found heart and time for doing the Lord's

work in a large and careful way; men who have given themselves to the founding and guiding of great Christian institutions, whose names are built into the life of our strongest and noblest churches, and who are living anew in the men and women whom they have personally led to Christ.

Facing the door of this church is the statue of such an one, who through many years of uninterrupted business life was known in this community as a man whose heart and mind were always filled with care for the religious interests of the community about him, and all the individuals whom he could personally reach. I may, indeed, speak of him with a deep sense of personal gratitude, for when Mr. William E. Dodge was a young business man, working to the full measure of his power, he found time not only to conduct a large Bible-class every Sabbath, but personally to labor with the members of that class until he led them one by one to Christ. It was the result of such personal visitation, time for which was snatched on his way to and from his business, that led my own mother to Christ, and, so I may say, determined my Christian life. We may well thank God for the abundant labors of the overworked business men in this city. There is no city in the land in which so much or such painstaking Christian labor is accomplished both by men and women. There is none in which the standard of Christian service

is higher, or in which the pattern of the Christian business man's life is purer. We only need to exalt that pattern for all and to encourage all to recognize that the Lord has placed no man in a position in which he may not do his best service, and win his worthy reward. It is simply a question of willingness and of purpose. We all need to recognize our daily privileges, and to shape our life with reference to them.

This church, with its splendid history, its noble men, and its boundless opportunities, may indeed do anything for the cause of Christ, and for the city of New York, if you business men but realize your opportunities. As you plan to give thought to the Lord's cause as a specific duty; as you are not content until you have found some place of definite personal service, something to which you can give your heart and your best thought—not something which can be done in idle hours, or when something else does not call you,—so the church prospers and so the Lord sends blessing. When the work of the church is done as business is done—with time and care, with wise planning, and large-minded intelligence and vigorous grasp,—then the religion of Christ is respected in the community, and the kingdom of Christ goes forward. Then Christ abides in His church, for His people are striving to abide in Him. They are making His cause and His service uppermost in their hearts.

Then the "Joy of the Lord is your strength," and bearing much fruit, as the Saviour has promised, you are His disciples indeed. I give thanks to God daily that so many of you business men, old and young, are doing this.

THE DEMAND FOR PROGRESS.

“ Reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—PHIL. iii. 13-14.

THE DEMAND FOR PROGRESS.

THERE is something in every heart that responds eagerly to the summons of this text. We feel the uplift of an appeal for progress. Coupled with the sense of dependence, which the philosophers tell us, is fundamental in man's thinking, is the desire of attainment. Our minds are so constituted as to strain always for a wider horizon, for new and larger possibilities. With the vanishing of this desire hope dies, and with the death of hope life ceases to be life. It becomes mere existence; and man, made in the image of God, sinks back into the life of the animal.

These two facts, the sense of dependence and the longing for progress, must be set side by side as the starting-points of all thought, and as the ultimate source of all our action. Here is to be found the explanation of the pleasure we have in the life of the young.

A service like that of Children's Day starts our blood and sets our nerves to tingling. We delight to gather the children about us. We respond to their excitement. The springs of our life seem filled again as we look into their young faces and hear their bright voices. The explanation lies not

in the surface facts. It is not in the pleasure of their eager joys and fresh enthusiasm. It is in the depths of our own hearts, as the longing of our souls is stimulated, and the desire of progress and attainment, growing dull with the advancing years, is kindled anew. The thought of the possibilities of their young lives gives filip to our old hearts, and stirs into quickened action our jaded pulses. We, too, are young again. We have not reached our goal. We have not done all that we yet may do. The horizon still lifts for us. There is something to which we yet may attain. We are glad of the children, for they make us glad for ourselves. After all, the years between us and them are short, and life is long. We have not grown too old to live. We are not out of the race. We have not ceased to be human, sons, indeed, of God.

Starting with this fact I am sure of your interest when I ask you to consider what, then, is this progress for which we all long? What form must it take that it may satisfy us? Certainly it does not lie in progress in material things. Increase in wealth, in luxury, in refinement; in the arts of life and in dominion over nature, whether it be an increase of things in our own hands or an increase in the world about us, is no measure of true progress.

We can manipulate matter after a fashion of which our fathers did not dream. The progress of

the century, of which all are so proud, is mainly in the way in which the forces of earth and air and sea present themselves like so many well-trained horses—obedient to man's hand—for all the service of daily life. We have made great advances in our skill in handling these forces, and consequently in the amount of service which they are every day rendering.

Our factories are full of machines of precision, each doing the work of many hands, producing the manufactured article at a fraction of its former cost, and giving employment to an army of laborers who are better paid and better fed than their predecessors were, and who receive a far larger share of the products of their labor. The telegraph, the electric light, the swift steamships, the railway, are but so many forms of the stretching forth of man's hand in masterful control over the forces of the earth. Everywhere science has become the cheerful handmaid of labor. Iron is now converted into steel without "puddling." Coal is resolved into gas for economic combustion. Electricity is weighed and measured for delivery as if it were cord-wood. The man of science to-day feels himself in duty bound to go from his laboratory to the factory and market with each new discovery he makes, in order that life may be in some way enriched and ameliorated by it.

But all this lies quite outside of ourselves. The

man who yesterday lived in a hovel may to-day live in a mansion. His candle has given place to an incandescent light; his tableware has changed to hammered silver; his crockery to Royal Worcester. His chromos are replaced by paintings from Paris. His brown-stone and his bronze may be the wonder of all passers. What measure is there in these things of true progress in the man himself? We are compelled to ask, is he by so much the more honest and truthful? Has he more faith or love? Is he humble? Is he pure in heart? Has he grown more unselfish? Are his sympathies larger and tenderer? Is his grasp upon God more real? Is he more of a man than before? Of this we have no suggestion. Yet surely these are what men are to live for. These shall endure when all the rest shall vanish. Indeed, what we are tempted to call our progress may be simply a record of a debt toward which we have paid little or nothing. What part had we in the costly devotion to truth and to God which brought our forefathers to these shores, and laid the foundations on which are built so much of what we are proudest? What part had we in the mighty throes in which our national institutions were begotten, or what sacrifice does it cost us to maintain them?

We are proud of the civilization of our age. How does it come to be ours, except as an inheritance to which we were born, and concerning which

we shall do well if we pass it on to our children unmarred. We pay, we say, for what we enjoy, for the house we live in, the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the books we read, the transportation we get on the cars, but what does our payment represent of the cost in productive thought and self-sacrifice and painful labor which each article that adds to our comfort represents?

What have we that we have not received, to the extent that it brings to us the result of a vast outlay to which we have contributed nothing? Progress there is, it is true, on all sides; how little of it we have any right to claim, as due to what we have done, and how much of it is limited to things in which we are in no sense a part. Progress in material things is well-nigh universal; but progress in moral attainment is most rare.

The "reaching forth to those things which are before," the "pressing toward the mark for the prize," which the apostle had in mind, in the text, which answers to the fundamental thought of progress in every heart, must be personal. It must be in ourselves rather than in our surroundings.

You see in the park a beautiful team. The horses' coats shine like silk. Their form is perfect; their metal is high, their speed like the wind. In blood and training they are the finest product of years of care. Suppose the man who owns them, whose every wish they obey, is less honest

than his horses. Suppose that as you look at them, man and beast, you feel that should the angel of the Lord stand in the way, as with Balaam, the beast is better fitted to discern him than his owner. What progress is there here to be proud of?

A beautiful yacht fixes the attention of all, as gathering the forces of the air in her wide spreading canvas she makes them do her bidding, or close-hauled she lays her course into the very eye of the wind. Suppose the men who sail her mind the helm that should govern their lives less surely than their boat does, and evince an all too fatal tendency to fall off before every strong wind of temptation.

Suppose a city is crowned with beauty and prosperity. Great buildings are there; models of strength and appropriateness. See how carefully their foundations are carried down to the rock. What if their owners are laying the foundations of their souls on the sand, and building themselves with wood, hay, and stubble? Here are splendid residences; what if the occupants are less admirable than their homes? What if rancor and strife and selfishness and vanity and impurity should be found dwelling amid the luxury and outward refinement? Here are successful stores, and busy, well-organized factories; what if the merchant is dishonest, or the manufacturer, in his eager selfishness, is indifferent to the welfare of the human beings in his employ,

or careless of the moral character of the community in which he lives? Would we have much of which to boast?

There comes to every man a day when these things by which we measure ourselves turn to nothingness. We find ourselves suddenly shaken free from them all. We are called to bid farewell to this world, and the eyes strain after glimpses of the life beyond. The merchant in that hour will scarcely give thought enough to his business to direct the disposition of it. The manufacturer cares nothing for his mill, though perhaps up to that day or week he has lived in and for it. Stranger still, the man of science, who perhaps has won fame in his studies, cares no more for them. The whole realm of thought in which he has lived vanishes from him. He asks no more for his books, and is indifferent to new discoveries. Even the father loses solicitude for his family, and the husband for his wife. The hour has come in which each must give an account, not of his goods, or of his learning, or of his household, but of himself. He must go out alone, separated from the dross of this life by a dissolution to which no electrolysis can compare. The question then is, has there been progress here? Have I been pressing forward, or have I only been improving the things which I must leave, which were not myself? Have I made some measure of attainment in the line which alone shall satisfy? Is the prize

of my high calling of God within my reach? Or have I been laboring upon the slag of the furnace from which the glowing metal is now to be forever poured off?

But, furthermore, it is manifest that this personal progress must be in a particular direction. We are to "press toward the mark for the prize of the *high calling of God in Christ Jesus*." Progress, to be true, must bring us into a growing likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every man has a calling, or is supposed to have. One is a teacher, another a physician, another a lawyer. One sells dry-goods, another groceries, another boots and shoes. One is a machinist, another a builder, another a banker. The first business of life is to learn to employ one's self. We but flounder until we have settled upon what we shall do, and are busy doing it.

Men are in the main known by their occupations. The work makes and marks the man. The difference, for example, between a doctor and a butcher, or a judge and a broker, is not in the costume! It embraces the entire man, and even controls his thoughts. Men are expected to follow their calling and to be moulded by it.

Now, we have, each of us, another calling aside from that of our mere occupation, a calling just as real, and far more authoritative. It is this in which Paul declared himself as pressing forward, and to

which he summons us, "The high calling of God in Christ Jesus." We are called to make a business of becoming like Jesus Christ. We are not born so. We do not by nature grow so. We shall not wake up some fine morning and find ourselves become so. It is not a call that clamors after us in the voices of the street. Hunger and thirst, and nakedness, and the need of a home to dwell in, and the favor of our fellow-men are not its ministers. We shall suffer no immediate want or obloquy if we do not regard it. Hard times may not divert us from it, and returning prosperity will not re-establish us in it. No one stands ready to reproach us with idleness or shame in regard to it. But it is a call none the less. Shame overwhelming, and want a thousandfold greater than of food or raiment, awaits the man who neglects it. A call to become like Jesus Christ!

How can I pursue this calling if I do not know what likeness to Christ is? Does it mean to be rich and refined; to be well-dressed and to have an exquisite taste? Is it to have a large knowledge of the world and of men, or to be shrewd at a bargain, and wise in investments? Is it to be well-read in books, or, successful in one's profession, or, as a young man, to be a great ball-player, or an oarsman, or a bicyclist, or a regimental officer; or is it to add something to whatever we may be in these directions; something over and above and quite

apart from them? Is it to be the friend of God? To have the experience of forgiven sins, to be a striver after righteousness, seeking those things which are above, "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God"? "Setting the affections on things above, not on things on the earth"? Resisting the devil and his works, and earnestly contending to become pure in heart, gentle, patient, honest, good, a lover of one's fellow-men? This is our calling of God. How can we enter it except we know that we have such a call, and feel the shame of offering any other as a substitute? Here is progress, for it is the growth of our very self; growth in what shall endure when all else shall vanish.

As we turn again to the text we find that it is charged with energy. It is couched in phrases of contest. "*Reaching forth* unto those things which are before, I *press* toward the mark for the *prize* of the high calling of God." This progress which shall satisfy can be attained only by effort. Energy is demanded. Persistency and patience are indispensable. Therefore, it is the voice of God appealing to all that is best in each of us.

In a measure this is true of all callings. You business men are fond of saying that business is not done as it was thirty years ago. You no longer write your letters and go home content to wait in peace until the slow answer comes from the ends of the earth. You buy and sell by telegraph, and the

merciless telephone pursues you to your bed-chamber. Your whole strength has to be concentrated upon rapid and incessant action. Go to the factory; the workmen are everywhere sitting at machines where a moment's inattention will ruin the product. You say, nowadays, that only he is successful who puts his soul into his work and does it with all his might; and you turn back from your high calling of God because it requires attention and purpose, and possibly self-sacrifice and self-denial! "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong," said the aged apostle. You are successful in business or in study, will you not meet the conditions of this service? Will you not strive to succeed here? Many of you have begun the Christian life. Your face shone with purpose; your voice was heard in the prayer-meeting. You had taken yourself in hand and were willing to do hard things for God, if only you might know Christ and grow in grace.

Or if not already a Christian you were eager to be. It was in your mind day and night. You knew you had a calling of God and were seeking to know how you might press forward and attain its prize. And you have grown cold. You are making progress in your business or in your profession your excuse. You have not time for religion. You hope that by and by it will turn out all right. Just read this chapter before us and see what hope there is that things will turn out to suit us, if we do not

turn them. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What loving earnestness in His appeal. "Brethren, be followers together of me." "So run that ye may obtain."

How little we grasp the meaning of this appeal of God to us. "Oh, I am not yet apprehended, I suppose," said a gentleman to me the other day, as we were talking of personal religion. He had evidently found in this appeal the manifest suggestion of a higher plane of life than that upon which he was living, and to justify himself to his own heart for not being what God would have him to be, was growing accustomed to think of himself as not yet called of God, not yet really grasped by the Divine

love. The Saviour had not laid down His life for him. Think of it. •

“If that I may apprehend that for *which also I am apprehended*,” was the apostle’s glad testimony. Every one of us is loved after the same fashion. Every one of us has the same high calling. Every one of us has the possibility of this progress of the soul. Every one of us is to be a true man in Christ Jesus, not if God wills, for God does will it for us all, but if we will, as He summons us all to shake off our lethargy, to arouse our will to do what He would have us to do, to be what He has made it possible for each of us to become.

And what, then, is the reward? How full these words are of it. It is “the excellency of the knowledge of God.” It is the “righteousness which is of God by faith.” It is the “power of His resurrection,” attained by us. It is at last to be made perfect, as “He is perfect.” It is to apprehend as we are “apprehended of Christ Jesus.” It is to win the “prize of the high calling of God.” It is to attain the goal for which every soul in its God-implanted longings for progress will surely cry.

No wonder that in our Lord’s account of the last day the redeemed are astonished by their reception, and ask in amazement what they have done to deserve so much. “Lord, when saw we Thee an-hungered and fed Thee, or thirsty and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger and took

Thee in, or naked and clothed Thee? or when saw we Thee sick or in prison and came unto Thee?" Then comes the wonderful answer, "Whenever you did one least thing in conscious self-denial, whenever you put forth the least effort of good, whenever you heard the voice of your high calling of God, and obeyed, whenever you reached after the things which are eternal, whenever you pressed toward the mark for the prize which is in Jesus Christ, ye did it unto me; enter into your reward.

Is it not, then, worth the while, beloved, to be true men? If a little effort will bring such a blessing, what will not a lifelong purpose obtain? To win Christ and to be found in Him; not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ. To have that true consciousness of the forgiveness of sins, of the possession of a new heart, of a grasp upon the eternal truth, of the power to overcome temptation; to have trust and calmness and strength. To be men and women growing daily in the things of God, and in victory over the world and the flesh, walking through life with your hand firmly held in the hand of the Saviour. This is the prize that God has set within the reach of all of you. What an infinite loss if any man come short of it!

THE HOME AND THE BUSINESS.

“And every man went unto his own house.”—
JOHN vii. 53.

THE HOME AND THE BUSINESS.

YOU will find in the folio of almost any artist some highly treasured sketches by the great masters. They are often little more than a few strokes : a hint of a head, or a figure, or a group, even a hand, or a limb, fixing the conception that was passing through the brain of the artist, but revealing to him who can interpret, both the master's thought and the master's method. In the rough pen sketch of two reclining figures, for example, you can see Michael Angelo's masterpiece, the tomb of the Medici, as it first sprung into his mind; as in those fragmentary crayoned groups you catch the forms that were to reappear in Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican. There is the finished work, here is the original sketch which determined its development, and in which its *motif*, its governing idea, and the relation to it of the several parts, are most clearly to be read.

The New Testament is a folio of such sketches of the Christian Church. They are from the hand of the Master himself, and of disciples under His immediate instruction. The Christian turns to them with an ever new pleasure, and is sure always to hit upon some new truth. It is only a line, a

passing incident, a thought caught and fixed for future reference, but it is discovered to be the germ of some great truth by and by to be unfolded, or the disclosure of some principle which is to underlie and govern the growth of the Christian community or the Christian character. Often it is a mere hint, but it throws open a window through which we can look upon God's wide ways of dealing with men, and gain for our varied need sweet consolation or refreshing strength.

Such a window is this brief text. It occurs in the midst of much weighty matter. The Saviour is discoursing of the great things of His person and work. The days are hastening to the end of His ministry and to the crucifixion. The discourses as recorded by John are long and move upon the highest plane. They deal with the Father from whom He has come, with the truth which He is, and with the souls of men, made for everlasting life, going down to eternal death. Suddenly, among other passing incidents treasured in the narrative, we come upon this. As the chapter closes, we read "And every man went unto his own house."

At once we see ourselves doing the same thing. Men have been doing it from that day to this. From all kinds of meetings, and all kinds of experiences, with hearts heavy or light, with thoughts wise or foolish, with hopes and fears, with anxieties and cares, with joys and sorrows, we turn every

man to his own house, there to put ourselves under conditions of life new and different.

It cannot but be that this experience so universal, so constantly recurring, is of God's planning, and plays a large part in our character and life.

Life in one's own house! It embraces more than half our hours, much more, if we reckon childhood and age. It will not be strange if we find it very full of meaning. Let us approach it, as we all in fact do every day, from without. See what going to his own house means to every man; first of all, in what he puts behind him.

He leaves his place of business. He leaves all conventions and clubs, places where men gather for enjoyment or stimulus. He leaves all committees, or little groups in which men combine for multiplied activity. These three, the place of business, the convention or club, and the committee or board, represent the three great departments of active life. In the one we bend our energies to getting on in the world, measuring ourselves with other men and seeking to master for our own benefit the great forces which determine success in life. In the second we obey the instinct which leads men to find pleasure and something of profitable excitement in assemblies of their kind, an instinct which expresses itself as truly in the loafing group of boys on the corner, or in the discussive chat around the stove in the village grocery, as in

the great political or religious convention. In the third we plan and plot to accomplish with the aid of others what we cannot hope to accomplish alone. These, the business, the convention, and the committee, make up our active life. They absorb, whether or not they satisfy us. They give us our chance. They are our opportunity and our tools. In them and with them we show what we can do, if indeed they do not make us the men we are.

A great deal is waiting to be said about this side of life. It represents the present joy of living, the joy of strong men summoned to put forth their strength, to think, to plan, to persist, to struggle, to overcome, to progress, in God's great plan of peopling the earth and subduing it, preparing the way for the oncoming of His final kingdom and the full revelation of Himself. It is a life worth living. Away the thought that measures happiness by exemption from necessity of labor, or deprecates the daily tasks that each morning summon the army of workers to lay strong hands to the wheels of daily life! But the single point before us is that as we turn our faces to our homes we leave all this behind. That simple act, then, of going each to his own house, must be full of meaning. You mount the steps, you unlatch the door. As you close it behind you, you shut the world out, and shut yourself in to a different scene.

Let us then in the second place see what that is.

It is the world of the home ; that little world so small in its area, so large in its meaning. It is the place of those unending personal duties and those incessant personal services which go to make up so large a part of the life of those we most love, and therefore so large a part of our own life. It is the place of the tenderest affections ; and the place where those affections are put to their true and constant test. There anxiety and care are never distant, and there sorrow touches depths and attains a dignity elsewhere unknown. There are the joys beside which all others are poor, and there are the burdens in comparison with which all others are light, and the problems and tasks to which all others are easy. Your hand is stretched out in proud mastery in your business; it falls powerless, and your head droops as you turn homeward and face the governing of your wayward son. You are brave before loss in your business; an arrow is in your heart as you open the door upon a sick wife or a suffering child. There is no escaping it. As we turn every man to his own house, we all recognize that we enter upon conditions entirely different from those that surround us elsewhere.

Even the man without a family, whose house is a single room, recognizes it. He closes his door upon himself. The world is outside. He must now deal with realities. He sits down to look into his own heart. He unclothes not his body only,

but his soul. His thoughts, his purposes, his motives, all that he has done, come up for review. He faces facts. There is no place for disguise. He seems to be doing little. They are idle moments in his room compared with the strenuous hours of the busy day, but morning by morning as he goes forth to his work he is made or unmade by what has transpired within those four walls.

We are now prepared to see as a third consideration how large a place this daily retirement to his home occupies in God's plan for every man's life.

We often wonder that in our physical life sleep fills so large a place ; we see no necessity for it. We often try to do without it. But it reasserts itself, a strange, stubborn fact. Seven, eight hours of every twenty-four we must devote to a use the purpose of which is not clear, but which, nevertheless, in some mysterious way is wrought into the deepest necessities of our physical nature.

In a far higher sense the same is true of the time we must give to the home. We do not always realize it. We magnify the claims of what we call our "business." We plume ourselves upon our devotion to business at the expense of our home. We think time taken from the home no robbery, but gain. We lay aside sense of responsibility, we ungird ourselves when we are at home ; however watchful, however jealous we may be of every hour

at the office or the store. We think little of the joys of home ; at best they are but pleasures. We shirk the duties of home. There is no money in them. They have small relation to the greater affairs of our business. We even grow impatient of home. At least some men do. They frequent the club ; they return to the office ; they must needs go and "meet a man," anything to get out of the house and escape the irksome life which seems to them so petty in comparison with their larger and more important cares.

But all this is foolish. God has set the solitary in families, and God's plans reach far. The family is something more than a social necessity. The home of a man is something more than the nest of a bird or the lair of the animal. God has made it a chief instrument in the fashioning of character. Its hours are sacred, its joys are pure, its duties are dominant, because in the plan of God they fill so large a place in making us, often in spite of ourselves, the men God would have us to be. The day comes when we are grateful for the innocent sleep "that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care, sore labor's bath, balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast,"—though in our young and foolish days we so despised it. After the same fashion, perhaps when home has ceased to be, when other feet cross the familiar threshold, and once loved voices are forever silent, we awake

to see what we have lost, we have thwarted God and impoverished ourself

This brings us to the closing thought, namely, that if we are wise, we will accept God's plan and try to make the hours in our own house play a large part in our preparation for both Christian growth and Christian service.

These hours hold us to the truth, that no matter how large our business or how many are affected by it, no matter how the world may measure us, we each stand alone before God. We each have our own soul; our own character to make; our own spiritual growth to secure; our own temptations to resist; our own account to render. Home keeps this before us. The old maxim, "No man is a hero to his valet," is the familiar announcement of it. Your wife, your children, your servants, know what you are. They are a kind of outside conscience to help you to be a better man. Run away from them, try to escape their testimony and their scrutiny, and by just so much you are the weaker and the worse. Live in your home and be not of it, hold it aloof, tyrannize over it, make it a mere place of physical convenience or bodily comfort, you degrade it and harden and debase yourself.

On the other hand, you who as Christian men long have enjoyed the blessing of a true home, what has it not been to you in all that goes to make up character?

——— “He within
Took measure of his soul and knew its strength,
And by that silent knowledge day by day
Was calmed, ennobled, comforted, sustained.”

There is the high ideal ; there is the large attainment of the man who has gratefully accepted the God-given opportunity, and in the hallowed retirement and sweet joys of a cherished home has grown into the stature of a strong and noble manhood.

But with the emphasis it lays upon personal growth and personal duty, the home also enforces a wise restriction of individual responsibility. The outer world calls us constantly to more or less public duties. Wrongs are to be righted, evils are to be reformed, the Church and the State are to be served. All this is well. It is a small life and a narrow one that does not take in the needs of others and feel some kindling response to the wants of the world. Still, we need to be reminded that the responsibility of men, the highest of men, is restricted within comparatively narrow limits

Following Christ one's self is a duty always more pressing than that of trying to make others follow. It is vastly easier to fall off into a fussy, bustling, outside, reformatory kind of Christian service, than it is to keep one's self in hand and correct evils nearer home. Therefore this turning every man to his own house, which comes to us with such recurrent daily routine, is God's way of bringing us back to

ourselves, and, while releasing us in a measure from the pressure of the world, setting before us the smaller duties in which we can none the less really and far more surely serve the Lord. The man who may not lead the church, may lead his household in spiritual life. He who strives in vain to reform the State may be more successful with his own family ; at least he has a task there which will keep him close to God. While the woman who is disheartened because of the slow advancement of the Temperance cause in the strifes and snares of politics, or mourns over the sluggish interest of her sex in the cause of woman's suffrage, is cheered and rehabilitated when turning to her home she finds her care and love the inspiration and the guide of its best efforts, herself the object of its best affections, the true centre of its life.

We want large blessings upon our church. We long to see the town revived and reformed. We want souls saved, and the horrid forces of death and hell swallowing so many young lives in our streets arrested. We want more time and strength for the Lord's work. The Sabbath is all too short, the week too crowded. We are hurried along, like men bound to the wheel of life with no time for anything, neither for the Lord's work nor our own growth. We look to the right hand and to the left for help. We would like to go to a convention. We wish some great meetings, some public services

might take us up and for a time lift us out of the pressure of daily affairs.

While we talk, the hour comes for going every man to his own house.

Ah, here it is, dear friends, the God-given summons to each one to face the real duty, to ask yourself searching questions, to find out what kind of a man you are, what you are doing, how you are living, and whither you are going. Well for you if you can say with Joshua, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" Well for you if going to your home means a heart at peace and strength renewed by closer fellowship with God.



THE SURE PROMISE.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”—MATTHEW vi. 33.

THE SURE PROMISE.

THIS is a peremptory text. It commands us to do this thing first because there is a special promise in store for those who obey. Just now a great many things are pressing upon us all in life, demanding our earnest attention. Times are hard; many are out of work. Many who have work are uncertain as to what will be the condition of things to-morrow. Many who are in charge of large businesses are anxious as to what a day will bring forth, and if ever a man found justification in listening to the voices of the street and the demands of business and secular affairs it is now. And yet over against them all sounds the text, as it has been sounding through all these centuries, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and these things that demand our attention in daily life, will take care of themselves," as we would put it. All these will be provided for.

But what does this mean? Is it given to us as a maxim of business? Are we to find here a specific prescription which, if we follow, shall cause us to prosper? There are so many exceptions to this. We recognize no visible connection between great riches and great piety. Is it not a low view of the

Bible that would set it thus alongside of "Poor Richard's Almanac"? Who can believe that the Bible was given us for this purpose? This text must mean something more than that "Honesty is the best policy."

Surely there is a larger truth; and it is to this larger truth that God bids us give heed. It is the voice of that deeper principle that is sounding for us to-day. The world is God's world. He made it, and He rules it, in all its various parts and in its totality. It is God's world, and it never for a moment escapes out of His control or eludes His knowledge. His title to it is never for one instant imperilled. The fact is we do not always believe this. We fall into thinking that to-day it is the devil's world; it was God's world once, but in some way the devil has gained possession of it, and by and by, in some distant future, God will take possession of it again. But now God is far off, interested in His own plans, busy with His own thoughts, waiting patiently for some fulness of time when He will begin to concern Himself with this world and its interests.

Instinctively we begin to divide people into two classes: those whom God loves and those whom He hates. However this habit originated it continues, and the gulf between these two classes deepens year by year—those whom God loves and those whom He hates. Along this line of thought,

more or less distinct to our minds, it is impossible to interpret the text. It has no interpretation. It means nothing. When the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God are regarded in any such sense, how is it possible to interpret success in one by success in the other? There is no common measure which will apply to them both. But we know that this line of thought is untrue, and in our better moments we realize that the world is God's world in all its endless variety of interests. The power of steam and the power of electricity are just as truly the powers of God as is the power of the heart's best affections. The laws of business and the laws of nature are just as truly laws of God as are the laws laid down in His Holy Word. God is in one just as truly as in the other. All life originates in God; all power is given to Him in Heaven and in earth.

You remember how Elijah, burdened with the anxious fears of life, as men are to-day, withdrew into the wilderness and wished he were dead, and God desired to teach him a fundamental truth. Elijah said, "I, only I, am left of all the Lord's people." And God told him to go forth and stand upon the mountain-top. "And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains." What did Elijah say? "The wind obeys God. He controls the storm that it did not harm me." Then followed the earthquake. Trem-

bling he beheld the earth shake and vast fissures open on either side. But he only said, "The earth is the Lord's. All its mighty forces are under His control." Then followed the fire; and the awe-struck prophet said, "The fire is God's messenger; this and all other forces are in the hands of my God." Then came the still, small voice. The prophet went out strengthened for the service of the Lord, whose he was and whom he could trust.

Now, dear friends, that is exactly the method by which God leads us all into the truth. All forces in the heavens above and the earth beneath are in God's hands to be used as He wills: for admonition, for guidance, for comfort, for warning, for strength. But all men are not in the same relationship to God. Was not the prodigal as truly the father's son, when he was in a far country, as when he was at home? Was not Jesus Christ as truly the Son of God when He was on earth proclaiming the message of salvation, as when He was in the bosom of the Father? It was necessary that He should come with this message of salvation, because through the long centuries Satan had blinded the eyes of the people and hardened their hearts, and far and wide was persuading men that God did not care for them.

The truth is that the Lord Jesus Christ died, not to save sinners from the hands of an angry God, but He came and died to save sinners from their

sins, from themselves, from their unbelief, from their hardness of heart. It is true that God often has to treat men as though they were His enemies. He often appears to be severe and austere toward them. But that austerity takes on the form that it does because of the reality of His love for them. The fact is that the whole universe is tuned in eternal harmony to this truth. It was made to declare God everywhere and always; the unseen things of God being made manifest in the things that are seen; but because of evil the world has partly lost this original expression of the divine love and of the divine thought, and as man advances in his knowledge we have everywhere the story of God's presence and of God's love. The geologist takes us to read with him the translation of it in the record of the rocks. If there is one form of science which to-day seems more advanced than another it is the science of astronomy. And what has it to tell?—the story of God's love in that vast world beyond the natural gaze.

Because God is everywhere, and the Father of us all, and all life is in His hand, it follows that the reward of Christian service is sure. In this way we interpret the Sermon on the Mount. How do we know the truth of such passages as these?—"Blessed are the pure, and the meek, and the merciful." Because God reigns. Why should the salt "retain its savor," and the light "shine"? Because

they are the work of God, and He has ordained that saving power shall come from salt, and shining shall come from light. Jesus says, "Pray for your enemies." Why? "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." "When you pray be not like the Pharisee, who loves to stand on the street corners and make long prayers that he may be seen of men; but when you pray enter your closet and pray in secret." Why? Because your Father which seeth in secret shall reward you openly. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" Why? Because you will either love the one and hate the other, or else you will hold to the one and despise the other. "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed." Why? Because your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Why? If you will serve your heavenly Father all things are yours, because all things are His.

Thus the whole of the moral law unfolds itself from this central truth, and we at once begin to consider the position which we occupy in the universe. What is it? We are like a young prince in the royal gardens. He walks amid all its beauties. Music and fruit and flowers abound on every hand. He may be inexperienced and ignorant. He may not be permitted to pick the fruit

or the flowers. He receives no wages, for he is not a servant. He is the son of the king. All these things are his to enjoy, his to dwell among; to be his possession when the day shall come in which his father shall see that he is ready to receive them.

Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, in the world which is His! This is the large meaning of the text. "Seek first the kingdom of God"; make sure your relations to Him, "and all things are yours." Shall I then have more than I have now? If I am poor, shall I be rich? If I am ill, shall I be made well? If I am despised and rejected of men, shall I be honored? Yes! just so far as your Heavenly Father sees shall be best for you. Your life is in His hands. All things are His to give or to withhold according to His divine wisdom. Seek first Him, and the relations that connect themselves with Him, and all things are yours.

Now, a few thoughts in conclusion. You see how manifest then is the duty that we should, every one of us, be a child of God. How many men are like the prodigal; boasting of their father's wealth and living on husks. How many men have obtained from God their wealth and all they have in life, and then have wandered away from Him, abusing His love, despising His service, and trampling under foot His kingdom; some even claiming that there is no God, and that if there is, He has no title to anything they possess. "I have earned this

money. I, through long years of toil and self-sacrifice, have laid up this property. Shall I not do with it what I will?" Shall such a one feel that the Father is his? Shall he expect that, when losses come, and health fails, and age advances, and that solitude which in time utterly isolates the self-loving man, he shall find peace and rest in the Father's love?

Sickness is the servant of God, not of the devil. Property does not belong to Satan, it belongs to God. Death is no black demon, ending life to blast all our hopes. It is God's messenger. Am I then anxious and pressed hard with care? Am I suffering pain and sorrow? Am I called to stand by the grave of those I love? My Father in heaven knows. All power is in His hands; all life is in His keeping. No care is too minute for Him. No labor wearies Him. If He is mine, I can trust Him; and I can lean on His love.

Then you see also how this ennobles and exalts our daily life. At once all distinctions between things religious and things secular vanish. If I pray I serve God, and so I do when I labor. As truly when I go to my office, or store, or workshop, as when I go to church. On the street, as at the altar, I am in my Father's house and am trying to live as His child. How utterly impossible it is to make a distinction between things secular and things religious in the life of our Saviour. He

was doing His Father's will as surely in the thirty years in which He dwelt in Nazareth, as in the three years in which He worked miracles and taught the disciples. So from the beginning to the end ; from His childhood in Nazareth to the cross in Jerusalem He was doing his Father's will ; so that at the close of His life He was able to say, "Father, I have glorified Thy name on earth ; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do ; and now I come to Thee."

Here is the great truth for us. The temptation is to exalt rituals, and to think that, when in company with our brethren on certain set days we attend the sanctuary, we worship Him, and that at all other times our lives are secular. We put Christ far off in some heavenly realm to which, perhaps, we hope to attain by and by, forgetting that He sent us to be His witnesses in the world, and that He has come into this world to abide and that here we are to do His will and to realize His love. How hard it is for us to learn that we can serve Him in disappointment, and in loss, and in pain, and in failure. How much there is in life that requires patience, and humility, and meekness, and walking softly, and waiting upon God ; until we come to know that not only the stars in their courses serve Him, but that we serve Him as well in all our daily life ; in the sweeping, and cleaning, and mending, and the care of little children, and

work at the store or at the carpenter's bench ; that the tools we use are His ; that we are His, and that in the place He has put us we are trying to live restfully and faithfully for Him. Ah ! dear friends, here is the fundamental truth, " Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Do not rest until deep in your heart you have become possessed of this truth, that God is your Father and Jesus Christ your elder brother. Settle that, and when you have settled it, go forth to your daily tasks, feeling the overshadowing wing of the Father and the blessedness of the divine love filling your life. " All these things " shall then be added unto you, for " your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."

CHRIST AND THE POOR.

“Ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.”—MARK xiv. 7.

CHRIST AND THE POOR.

ON His way to Jerusalem for the last time, our Lord had stopped at Bethany. There, where He had often been, and doubtless had many friends, for it was the home of Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, a dinner was given Him at the house of Simon the Leper. We do not know who this Simon was, but there is every probability that he was one of the many who, during the past three years, had been healed by our Lord. He was not a leper now, or he could not have given a dinner; for lepers were outcasts. But he had been, and the feast was an expression of his gratitude.

Naturally Lazarus was among those present to do honor to Jesus; and Martha, his sister, served. As the dinner was in progress, a woman, who John says was Mary, the other sister of Lazarus, came into the room, bearing a small jar of very precious perfume, and, breaking off the neck, poured the contents upon the head and person of the Master, as He reclined at the table, and wiped His feet (upon which it ran) with her hair. The disciples, following the murmuring suggestion of Judas, protested against the waste of the ointment. "It might have been sold for three hundred pence." "Yes,

more," says Mark, "and given to the poor." But Jesus quickly silences them with the reply, "Let her alone. Why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work upon me, for ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good, but me ye have not always."

This answer arrests our attention. It is very different from what we might have expected. Jesus knew that the murmuring arose with Judas, and we look to see Him vindicate Mary against her accusers, but what a strange ground He takes. Why does He not put them to shame by exposing Judas? or, if the time has not come for that, surely He will say something about hypocritical regard for the poor. Any waste that expresses love is better than the wisest charity that covers deceit.

But this is not His answer. He exalts above charity of every kind the service which Mary has done to Him. "Let her alone, she hath wrought a good work on me."

Bear in mind that our Lord takes this position at the close of a ministry which had been pre-eminent-ly a ministry to the poor. Shortly before He had declared that service done to the poor, at least in some cases, is to be regarded as done unto Himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." He had always lived among the poor. He had time and again declared His sympathy to be with

them and against the rich. Had He not said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven"? Had He not said, "Blessed are ye poor," making the poor in purse a type of the poor in spirit?

Was not the very first announcement of His ministry, as He stood in the synagogue at Nazareth, the application to Himself of the words of the prophet, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor"? And did He not make this the sign of His coming, that "To the poor the Gospel is preached"? But in the closing hours of His ministry, when His words are weightiest, He seems to set care for the poor in contrast with devotion to Himself. They certainly are not to be regarded as identical; and there may be conflict between them.

It would seem that to-day the words gain a special importance and challenge us to a peculiar thoughtfulness. Charity is always beautiful. It is everywhere recognized as the great harmonizing force in this world of strife, selfishness, and greed. It is beneficent alike to the giver and the receiver. It has always been a chief function of the Christian church. The exclamation of the heathen at the outset, "Behold, how these Christians love one another," was drawn forth by the abundant charities of the Christians, administered without regard to all

who were sick or in need. The church has not been slow to discern that its hold upon the world must largely depend upon the keenness of its interest in the condition of the poor and needy, and its success in ministering to them. Indeed, so far has this practice been carried, that the church at times has not been without blame for an abundance of alms which has spread pauperism, and even promoted crime.

Every reform movement in the church has emphasized and extended the work of charity. John Wesley gave to it no small share of his thought, and organized it into his ecclesiastical system ; and modern movements as extreme and narrow as that of the ritualistic party in the Church of England, has made of it a powerful lever to forward its cause. In societies for the care of all classes and conditions of men the churches to-day are leading the world. Whatever may be said by thoughtless accusers, the work of charity in this sad world is not only inspired by love in Christian hearts, but is largely in Christian hands. The church has nothing to accuse itself of in falling behind in its practices the teachings and spirit of its Master.

But, when all this has been said, the text remains, with its suggestive utterance. It challenges our most serious thought. It calls on us to recognize that, after all, in charity we are only dealing with the surface of things. We are discovering in these

days how difficult it is truly to help even a single individual who may be in need—to help in such a way as to secure self-respect, manliness, and a permanent bettering of his condition. And this even with the individual, to say nothing of the class.

We are learning with new depth of conviction that each time of widespread need and each case of individual want is only an episode in a vast movement, a bubble, a drop from out the stream of life. We are made more and more aware of this as we look into the current that flows out of the past. We are part of the inheritance which we all share. We are heir to what has been called “the wreckage of the past”; the follies and evils of those who have gone before, the odds and ends that have survived from extinct philosophies and civilizations, and the schemes of all kinds that have come down to us with their powerful results, and have united in making for us the life which we are living and of which we are a part

The poor are but one product of this mighty congeries of forces. They in no way differ in this respect from all else that we recognize as going to make up the life which we are living. As we are not permitted to choose the time or the place of our birth, so we cannot materially change the conditions under which we find ourselves. We long to change them. We are beset with theories to show how the desired change may be accomplished ;

theories of government, of society, of finance, of commerce, even of civilization itself. And theories of religion are not lacking, which, if adopted and applied, it is claimed, would quickly alter the whole structure of society. But the world is an old world. It has tried many experiments and seen many changes. It has modified itself greatly, chiefly as the result of influences which have been little understood, and in obedience to laws as eternal as itself. And the patent fact to-day is that, struggle as he may, no man can escape from the power of these world-forces under which he finds himself living. He may swim a little to the right or the left in the stream. He may rise above the surface, or sink deeper into the depths, but when it comes to altering the current of the stream, the united labors of men, at best, seem to be able to deflect it but a little from one side to the other, never to arrest its course. This is prescribed for us by a power far above, and is determined by methods and purposes that were set long before we were in existence, and will continue long after we are gone.

"We have our day and cease to be," and there remains that in the stream of life which is not only more important than ourselves, but which, as related to the future, is so unfathomable, so enduring, so utterly beyond us, that we have small competence even to pass judgment upon it.

What, then, is God's message to us? It is that

in the midst of it all we fix our eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and establish our hearts in the faith that centres in Him. We absorb ourselves in works of benevolence, our hearts are stirred and blessed by the care of the poor and the needy, but we must not fail to see that all we can do in these directions is as nothing compared with the power of Jesus Himself, as the one re-creating and renewing force by which the world is to be saved. The world was worn out when He came into it. Its civilization and its science, its learning and its experience had all failed to suggest any method by which the destructive forces in its own heart could be arrested.

The world was dying from the rottenness of its own sins, and despair was fast settling down over it all. Mommsen closes his history of Rome with these words, "We have seen the end of the Roman republic. We have seen it brought to ruin in politics and morals, religion and literature, not through outward violence, but through inward decay. There was in the world, as Cæsar found it, much of the noble heritage of the past centuries and an infinite abundance of pomp and glory, but little spirit, still less taste, and least of all delight in life. It was indeed an old world, and even the gifted patriotism of Cæsar could not make it young again." It is older now, and apart from Jesus Christ its ruin and its despair would be deeper to-day than when He came. He brought new life. Christian civilization

with all its amelioration of man's condition and all the hope for the future that is in it, came from Him.

The kingdom of heaven which He brought then was as the leaven to be hid in the meal, or the good seed to be planted in the field. It was a life new and distinct from the world into which it was introduced. Without it there would continue to be the darkness of death, but wherever it was introduced it brought light ; and the light has been contending with the darkness ever since. The world accepts civilization as we see it to-day as if it had always existed, and here and there turns away from the religion of Jesus Christ, falling back upon the powers of civilization itself, as if there were life in it apart from Christ, but the essential fact is, that the only force which has the power to renew is that which is embodied in Jesus.

The extent and the efficacy of this force can be witnessed any day in the lives of the men who have been changed by it. The drunkard, the prodigal, the outcast who but now were not only without God, but utterly without hope in the world, and for whom the world had no place, are to be seen new men and women. Not only new as related to the hope of heaven, and the favor of God, but new and different men as fathers and husbands and friends and citizens, clothed and in their right mind, working strenuously for the good, where before they were hopelessly surrendered to evil.

The thought which the Saviour was pressing upon His disciples in the solemn hour when His death was near is, that however the heart may be stirred by the woes of our fellows, however the hands may busy themselves with the clothing of the naked and the feeding of the hungry, these labors have power in changing the conditions of life only when they carry with them the life that comes with Jesus Christ, and are wrought in recognition of Him and in dependence upon Him for the gift of that new life, without which death and despair still reign. "Without me ye can do nothing," is still the abiding truth.

But, furthermore, we must not fail to see that Jesus Christ is to renew the world, and eventually to save it, by the change which He works in individuals, and not by the reverse process of changing society first.

This is one of the most patent facts in both the teaching and ministry of our Lord. He came to a nation trampled beneath the heel of its conqueror. He came to a people whose were the oracles of God, at that time under the dominion of heathenism, which was fast corrupting its youth and undermining the sanctions of its religious faith.

He lived under a government represented by the atrocities and the vileness of the Herods, by the cruelty of Pilate, by the ruthlessness of the Roman tax-gatherer, and the oppression of the Roman sol-

dier ; He saw about Him a society in which the profligate and shameful vices of the Orient united with the coarser prodigalities of the West, and in which money and rank and the lust of power and the greed of gain produced such results that the great cities with all their luxury and elegance had come to be described as "cesspools" and "sewers"; and yet, finding Himself in these surroundings, He seemed to be entirely indifferent both to the form of government and the construction of society, and, we may almost say, to the relation of class to class. He pays tribute to Cæsar, and exhorts His followers to do likewise. He says not a word against human slavery, or against any form of vice as being the vice of society, or as the outcome of the social conditions under which men were living. He does not even discuss the position of woman, the crowning shame of heathenism in all ages, and always related to the first step in every upward movement of men.

That this was His real attitude is confirmed by the conduct of His disciples and followers. Everywhere they taught subjection to those who were in authority, and the duty of prayer even for the heathen king. They exhorted the converted slave to return to his master ; and in no single instance are they found trying to overthrow the existing society, or to create a new world by first bringing about the destruction of the old.

Anarchy and Nationalism are both equally aloof from the range of their thoughts. They want neither destruction of the government, nor help from it. Even after the government of Rome had come under their influence and the emperor on his throne proclaimed himself a Christian, the work of the Gospel was done as before, not by changing the form of the government, or the institutions which it had established, but by filling them with a new spirit. Indeed, one of the most remarkable facts in connection with the Justinian code—the summary of Roman law made in the sixth century—is the testimony it gives to the slight influence which Christianity had upon the administration of the empire. Instead of altering the law it contented itself with an indirect influence upon it. The impress of its spirit is to be traced everywhere, but there is little or no evidence of purpose on the part of the Christians to reconstruct, organically, either society or the government.

Undertaking the conquest of Rome, Christianity began with the mind and the heart of the individual. It contented itself with introducing there new truth, evidencing itself in a new purity of life, and a new relation of the individual man to his brother; and it was this force, the introduction of Jesus into the heart of the believer, upon which Christianity relied for its final triumph in the world.

Indeed, so uniform is the testimony to this truth,

and so indisputable is it, that it is entirely conceivable that, if Christianity had adopted a different course and had begun at once to grapple with the thousand questions of social life and of government, slavery, the ballot, woman's rights, the laws of property and so on, it would have been crushed; whereas, as it was, though swept by many floods, burned by many fires, and bearing testimony to the violence of many a storm, it has produced and is producing the fruits of progress and of reform which we to-day are enjoying. The method of Christ, then, is to renew the world by changing the heart of the individual man; and, when life has begun in his soul, by the force of that growing life to change, first his personal habits, and then through him the life and habits of his neighbor, and so, finally, the community as a whole. The new heavens and the new earth which are to mark the final triumph of the Lord are to begin in the character and life of the believer.

But the great truth of the text is that there is a limit to the time in which this work can be done. "The poor ye have with you always, but me ye have not always." Both for our civilization and for ourselves the Saviour's warning is that a day may come when it will be too late to lay hold of and profit by the life which He brings.

The state may go on too long uninfluenced by His people, and by the recognition of the duties

which He declares, the duty of man to man, and the duty of the state to reveal and hasten the oncoming of the kingdom of God in the earth ; in which case the state itself will be disciplined or overthrown. Witness, for example, France in the last century, or the United States itself as a slaveholding community. The possibility of ridding ourselves from negro slavery by the inherent force of Christian truth, and Christian brotherhood, working out from man to man, and so gradually creating a society which of itself would cast aside the fetters of the slave which were its peril and its shame, passed away, and in its stead God laid us under the necessity of freeing ourselves from the incubus by that terrible war which cost us so much in the best life of the nation, and under the evils of which we are yet suffering.

Still more is this true of the individual. "Me ye have not always." You may have wealth and pleasure and business. Head and hands may be full of problems of politics and of society, and of the needs of your fellow-men. You may be giving yourself with all your might to the reconstruction of the universe, or the remodeling of the government, or the casting out of Tammany, waiting, meanwhile, for leisure to find Christ for your personal Saviour, or to cultivate His love in your heart. The warning of the text is that that hour may be too long deferred.

There are times of decision with us all, crises of

character. He who would do good to his fellows can only be sure that what he strives for will result when he has himself found the life of Christ for his own soul, and is so sedulously cultivating that life and growing in the power of it that he can be assured that he is carrying Jesus Christ with him wherever he goes, and into whatever he does. The more your hearts are given to these acts of philanthropy, the more your souls are stirred with the needs of your fellow-men, or the needs of this great city or this land that we all love, the deeper should you feel your need of constant communion with Christ, and all the fullness of His life possessing your own hearts. No matter how much of effort or of care and time it may take to win this possession, these are days in which the Lord is pleading with you for Himself. He to-day is passing by. He sits with you in your home. He is a guest at your table. He goes with you to your place of business. He responds to the beating of your heart, with its wide sympathies for your fellows. He says again and again in your ear, "This ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone. The poor ye have with you always, but me ye have not always."

First, give yourself to me. First make sure of my place in your heart and in your life ; then set yourself to your task. When you can hear me say, "Lo, I am with you all the days," then no matter

how great the evil, or how perplexing the problems of the hour, "You shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea ; and it shall obey you." For then the life of God is in you, and the power of God is working through you to bless the world. In a word, no man can effectually help his brother, until he has found abiding help for himself in Jesus Christ.

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